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THEOLOGY,

IN A

SERIES OF SERMONS,

IN THE ORDER OF

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM.

BY

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SERMON LII.

HEBREWS ix. 27. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*And as it is appointed unto men once to die.*"

THESE words present to us a solemn subject, and one in which we are all most deeply concerned. For all must die. In this warfare there is no discharge. This is as certain as that we now live. To this truth the word of God bears uniform testimony. And however little many of mankind may be affected with it, the truth itself is readily acknowledged by all; for all have the melancholy proofs of it constantly before their eyes.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to consider the subject of *death*, in a doctrinal point of view.

This doctrine is contained in our Catechism in the answer to the 37th question.

"*What benefits do believers receive from Christ at their death?*

The souls of believers are at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection."

This answer relates especially to believers. It supposes their death; and is principally intended to point out their condition, and the benefits which they receive from Christ, in the state of separation of the soul and body. But although the answer mentions only believers, we may suppose the death of the wicked to be implied; and also their state after death, during the separation of the soul and body, previous to the resurrection. And this supposition is confirmed by the consideration that in our

Larger Catechism, in this place, the state of the wicked, after death, is mentioned, as well as that of the righteous. We shall therefore in the ensuing discourse consider death, in reference to both the righteous and the wicked.

In treating the subject we shall enquire,

I. Why do believers die?

II. What is the state of the soul immediately after death?

III. What is the state of the body?

I. Why do believers die?

Death is the consequence of sin, and was denounced as a punishment for sin. It is a part of the sentence of condemnation which the law denounces for transgression. But, "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Rom. viii.1. Why then do believers die?

It is certain, it is not because God could not bring his people to heaven without dying. He might consistently do this; for Enoch and Elijah were taken there without passing through death; and if the Lord pleased, he might consistently take more and even all of his people in the same way. However he has not pleased so to do; but has appointed that they, as well as others, should die; and that they should pass to glory through death.

It is evident also that, although death happens to the believer in *consequence* of sin, yet it is not inflicted upon him as a part of the curse of the law. For Rom. viii. 1. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"—And Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." Death is therefore not a curse to the believer; it is not inflicted in wrath upon him, as it is upon the wicked. But still death is painful, human nature shrinks back from it, and it is distressing to the christian. Why then must he die, seeing he is under no condemnation—is redeemed from the curse of the law—God loves him, and it would be consistent with his perfections to take him to complete blessedness in heaven, without requiring him to pass through the agonies of death? This is a question which we must resolve into the sovereignty of God—a sovereignty which is exercised agreeably to infinite wisdom. God has doubtless infinitely wise reasons, for what he does in this respect as well as every other. But we shall probably not be able fully to understand them, until the

plans of infinite wisdom, in bringing his chosen to glory, be fully unfolded in a future world. We may however offer some probable reasons why the people of God die.

1. God would have his children conformed to their great Head, and Forerunner Christ Jesus; and he passed to his glory through suffering and death. And this may be one reason why God hath ordained, that believers though delivered from the curse of the law through the death of Christ, should nevertheless die, that they might be, in this respect, conformed to their great Head, and Forerunner, and pass to glory as he did through suffering and death.

2. Another reason may be, that God has not intended to make a full manifestation of his children in this world; but has reserved such manifestation for a future world. We know from the whole of his dispensations towards his children in this world, that he does not intend fully to discover by his dealings towards them here, who are his children. "For he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Mat. v. 45. One event happeneth to all. He has intended that in this world, we should walk by faith, and not by sight. 2 Cor. v. 7. But if the righteous were to pass from this world to another, without dying, it would always fully appear in the end, who were God's people, and who were not; and thus the manifestation of the sons of God would take place in this world, which he has not intended; and we should constantly have a kind of evidence of the truth of religion, which God has not intended to give the world. We would then walk by sight rather than by faith; which would be altering the plan by which the Lord has intended to glorify himself in the salvation of sinners.

3. Another reason may be that believers die in mercy to his surviving people. For if believers passed into heaven without dying, it would always be known, when persons came to leave the world, whether they were christians or not, and what is their future state. In this case whenever persons died, it would be certainly known that they had gone to misery. And in our present state, in the exercise of natural affection, what dreadful disappointments, would many suffer, who had entertained hopes of the piety of their friends, when they saw them die! They would by this event assuredly know that they had gone

to misery. And what inexpressible pangs would many pious persons endure, to have the assurance, without any gleam of hope to the contrary, that their friends, whom they tenderly loved in this world, were forever lost, beyond the possibility of recovery; and were then, and continually, enduring the wrath of God, without any rest, day or night! It is true when the saints get to heaven, they will know what has become of those they loved here; but then God will be all in all; and a regard to his glory will so entirely fill the soul, as to prevent any pain, from a knowledge of the sufferings of those, for whom we felt a natural affection in this world. But in our present state, such knowledge would often be a source of keen, lasting, and insupportable distress; and hence it is ordered in infinite wisdom, that all the friends as well as the enemies of God, should die.

4. We observe again that death is a blessing to the christian. It tends to keep him humble, and promote the growth of the important grace of humility. It is calculated to fill him with a deeper sense of the evil of sin, than he would otherwise have, and to embitter sin to him, by which death was introduced into the world, and lead him to hate it the more. It is calculated more deeply to impress him with a sense of the love of Christ, by knowing from experience, something of what Christ endured for him; and thus has a tendency to increase his love and sense of obligations to the Saviour; and will the better prepare him for the blessed employment, of celebrating the praises of redeeming love throughout eternity. Besides some christians, are by death enabled to glorify God before the world, perhaps more, than if they were exempted from death, by manifesting the excellence of religion to support them under the heaviest afflictions, and strengthen them to meet even the king of terrors with fortitude and composure.

5. The christian, we have reason to believe, will finally enjoy the blessings of heaven more, than if he never had died. We know that in this world, when a person has been in great labour, distress, or pain, and finds relief, rest, and comfort, his enjoyment is much more exquisite than if he had not been labouring or suffering. On the same principle, the enjoyments of heaven will be heightened by the previous sufferings of the believer, and

therefore by the agonies of death. And the final triumph which all believers shall have over death and the grave, "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality;" And that saying is brought to pass, "death is swallowed up in victory." And they shall sing that song, "O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ—" (1 Cor. xv. 54, 55, 57.) will be a source of inexpressible happiness to them, which they could not have had, if they had never been called to combat with death.

These are some of the reasons which may be offered in answer to the inquiry, why believers, though delivered from condemnation through Christ, nevertheless die.

We proceed—

II. To enquire what is the state of the soul immediately after death? The soul does not die with the body, but survives it, and exists in a separate state. The immortality of the soul has already been proved in a former discourse. The state of the souls of the righteous and the wicked after death is widely different. "The souls of belivers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory." But as stated in our Larger Catechism, "the souls of the wicked are at their death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness." The departed soul goes into no middle state, such as purgatory is described to be; neither does the soul sleep at death, and continue in a state of inactivity, and insensibility until the resurrection of the body, as some have supposed; but it passes immediately into a state of happiness or misery. The souls of the righteous, at the instant in which the separation from the body takes place by death, are perfected in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, where they are active and enjoy the happiness of heaven, in a state of separation from the body. And on the other hand, the souls of the wicked, are immediately after death, cast into hell, where, in their separate state, they endure excruciating torment.

The truth of this statement is confirmed by the testimony of the Scriptures. We find no mention made in the Scriptures of such a place as purgatory. We are therefore warranted from the silence of the Scriptures to conclude there is no such place. Besides the Scriptures fre-

quently teach that the present life is the only season of probation, and that death will unalterably fix the state of the man: which is a further conclusive argument against the existence of such a place as purgatory. And to these we may add that the object of such a place, as set forth by its advocates; which is, by suffering, to make atonement for sin, is contrary to the whole tenor of the word of God.

That the soul does not sleep until the resurrection is equally evident from the Scriptures. That the souls of the wicked do no sleep, but are immediately cast into hell, appears evident from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, recorded Luke xvi. "The rich man also died and was buried. And in in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." It is evident that this parable was intended to represent the state of the wicked, not after the resurrection, but immediately after death; for the rich man being denied his first request, spake of having five brethren, still living on the earth; and requested that Lazarus might be sent to warn them, lest they also should come to the place of torment in which he then was. Hence it is certain the parable was intended to represent the state of the soul of the rich man, immediately after death.

And that the souls of the righteous do not sleep until the resurrection; but pass immediately into the heavenly blessedness, the same parable teaches. "The beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."—This doctrine is also proved by what our Saviour said to the penitent thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 43. "Verily I say unto thee, *to-day* shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*."—The same is further proved by what the Apostle said of himself, and other christians. 2 Cor. v. 6. 8. "Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." Here presence with the Lord is inferred as an immediate consequence of absence from the body, which is effected by death. Once more, this doctrine is proved by what the Apostle says, Phil. i. 21, 23. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be

with Christ which is far better." Here Paul asserted that it would be better for him to die than to live; which would not have been true, if he had passed into a state of insensibility; for Paul, while in this world, enjoyed in communion with his Saviour, more happiness than misery. Besides in the passage quoted, he tells us the reason why he would be happier if he should depart, viz. that then he would be with Christ, which was far better than to live.

From all these proofs, it is abundantly evident, that the soul immediately after death, passes into a state of happiness or misery, where it shall continue, enjoying the one, or suffering the other, until its reunion to the body at the resurrection. It remains now that we answer the

III. Inquiry proposed, which was, what is the state of the body after death? The body returns unto the dust, whence it was taken. It descends into the grave, a land of silence, and of darkness; and there becomes the prey of worms and corruption, and moulders into dust. This state of the body after death is common to both the righteous and the wicked. But still there is a very great difference between the state of the bodies of the righteous, and of the wicked. The bodies of the righteous after death continue united to Christ. For the union which the believer has to Christ in this life is a union of the whole man body as well as soul, and this union is a permanent one which even death cannot dissolve; for neither *death* nor life, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Besides the saints are said to *sleep in Jesus*. And not only do the bodies of the righteous continue united to Christ; but also their grave is called a bed, and a place of peace and rest. My flesh (said the Psalmist, Ps. xvi. 9.) shall *rest* in hope." "If we believe, (said Paul, 1 Thes. iv. 14.) that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which *sleep in Jesus* will God bring with him." And Is. lvii. 1, 2. we read, "The righteous shall enter into *peace*: they shall *rest* in their *beds*." The death of the body is to the righteous a sleep, and the grave is a bed. Their dust is all precious in the sight of Christ, he watches over it and will raise it again in glory. Not so with the bodies of the wicked. The grave is to them a prison, in which they are locked up by Christ as an offended judge, until the resurrection and judgment of the great day; where they shall be raised in dishonour, and be brought forth as out of prison to execution.

A few reflections will now close this subject.

How great an evil is sin! It is the cause of all the miseries which we suffer, or see in this life. It is the cause of death; and of all those dreadful and eternal miseries which the wicked suffer after death. Shall we then continue to love sin? Shall we roll this poison as a sweet morsel under our tongues? Shall we cherish this viper in our bosoms? Shall we not rather hate sin, watch and war against it, and flee from it as from our most deadly foe?

Again, what reason have we to be humble! "It is appointed unto men once to die." We are included in the decree. Let us consider to what we are coming. Soon will these bodies become a lifeless lump of clay and be buried out of the sight of survivors. Soon will the rich and the poor, the high and the low, mingle together in one place, where a king cannot be distinguished from a peasant; and where worms and corruption will make no distinction, but will alike prey upon all. Come ye proud children of men, view this just picture which you are too apt to keep out of sight; and let it humble your pride. In view of this subject, how foolish is that pride which is founded on beauty of form and complexion, or on wealth or descent, and which leads a person to look down with contempt, on others of perhaps far more noble and virtuous minds, and far more useful in the world, and therefore far more deserving of esteem! Soon you must mingle with these persons and be brought to a level with them, where your bones and dust cannot be distinguised from theirs. Come and view this picture, and say with Job, "to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister," (Job xvii. 14.) and abase your pride and be humble. And learn further from this picture of yourselves, the folly of being so anxious about the body, and spending so much precious time to pamper and adorn it, and fulfil its lusts, when it must so soon be corrupted and moulder into dust.

And is this the end of man! Is there no hope beyond the grave! must death and the grave forever reign! Alas! how gloomy the thought! how insupportable the prospect of death! But blessed be God for the Gospel; it dispels this gloom, brings life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ, and opens a world of bliss to the righteous. Though the body dies and moulders into dust; yet the soul lives

and goes to God who gave it. Death is unspeakable gain to the believer. It puts an end to sin and sorrow. It introduces the soul made perfect in holiness, into the blessedness of heaven. And the body shall rest in hope. Christ will take care of it and will raise it up at the last day.—How blessed are the righteous!

But this same revealed word of God which opens such a glorious hope to them, renders the prospects of the wicked still more dreadful. Gloomy as is the grave, well would it be for the wicked, if this were the end of them.—But this is not the case; for while the body moulders into dust, the soul must live in inexpressible misery. And the body must one day come forth of its prison, and the soul and body united be forever tormented together. Let the miserable end of the wicked, and the happy end of the righteous influence us all so to live, that we may die the death of the righteous, and our last end be like his.—AMEN.

SERMON LIII.

THE RESURRECTION.

ACTS XXIV. 15.

"*And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

The sentence pronounced by God upon the human race, when our first parents had sinned, was, "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". Gen. iii. 19. This sentence has ever since been executing; and death has passed on every individual of the human family, down to the present generation, except Enoch and Elijah. All the numerous generations which have lived before us are in the dust. Our earth must therefore be one vast graveyard. To the innumerable multitudes already under ground, must soon be added the millions of the present

generation, and finally in succession, all the unknown generations, which, down to the end of time, are yet to people our world. The irreversible decree of heaven is, "it is appointed unto men once to die." Heb. ix. 27.—And must the bodies of this innumerable multitude forever lie in ruins? Must they become the prey of worms and corruption, and moulder into dust, without hope? Must the dominion of death and the grave be eternal? gloomy prospect! Tolerable only to the wicked! and to them rendered tolerable only by the conviction, that if there be a resurrection, it will be to their misery. But the word of God dispels this gloom. All the vast army of the dead shall rise again. Of this our text assures us. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." We have considered the subject of death. The doctrine of the *resurrection* follows next in order. To this doctrine is your attention solicited in the ensuing discourse.

The resurrection is mentioned in the 37th and 38th questions of our Catechism.

By the resurrection of the dead, we understand the rising again of the self-same body which was laid in the grave, to be animated with the self-same soul, with which it was united before death; so that every individual after the resurrection will be the same person substantially, as before death, though in form and appearance he may be greatly altered. The body, which shall be raised, will be formed out of the same particles of matter, which composed it before death.—These, wherever scattered, and in whatever form they may be, shall be collected together by the power of God, and unite with each other, and assume the form of a human body; and into that body shall the same soul which once dwelt in it, re-enter.

That the same body which was laid in the grave, shall be raised at the last day, is necessarily implied in the very nature of a resurrection. If it were a different body, or a body composed of different particles of matter, from those which composed the body when it was laid in the grave, it would be a creation, and not a resurrection—Therefore, if there be a resurrection, the same bodies, substantially must rise, which were laid in the dust.

The resurrection of the dead is a doctrine purely of revelation; And it is from the revealed word of God a-

lone that the question can be answered shall the dead rise again ? That they shall rise is taught both in the Old and the New Testament ; though much more frequently, and clearly in the latter than in the former.— That this doctrine was believed by the Jews or at least a part of them,and perhaps all, except the Sadducees, is evident from our text. " And have hope towards God, *which they themselves also allow*, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." These words are a part of Paul's defence before Felix the Roman Governor, in reply to the accusations of the Jews. They charged him with heresy ; but he declared his belief of all things written in the law and the prophets ; and especially his belief of the doctrine of the resurrection which the Jews themselves allowed to be true. That the Jews except the Sadducees were acquainted with this doctrine and believed it, is further evident from Acts xxiii. 8. "For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit ; but the Pharisees confess both."

In the Old Testament we find a few passages which teach this doctrine, and by which the church in that age were led into the knowledge and belief of it. When God appeared unto Moses, in the burning bush at Horeb, " Exod. iii. 6. He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." These words are a proof of the doctrine of the resurrection. For our Saviour when answering the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, while they professed to believe the five books of Moses, referred to this passage as a proof of it, Luk. xx. 37, 38. " Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.— For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living." This doctrine is again taught in the following passage Job xix. 25, 26, 27. " I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another;" This doctrine is also proved from Dan. xii. 2. " And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to

everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." There are several other passages in the Old Testament from which this doctrine is argued, though they are not so express as those which have been quoted.

In the New Testament this doctrine is very frequently and clearly taught. It is taught by the instances of dead persons being restored to life; and by the resurrection of our Lord himself. Besides a great many texts expressly affirm the doctrine. We shall quote some of the most prominent. Our text is very explicit. "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." So also are the following passages—John v. 28, 29, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John vi. 39, 40. "And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: And I will raise him up at the last day." Luke xiv. 14. "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Acts iv. 2. "They taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead." Acts xvii. 18. He preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection." I Cor. vi. 14. "And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power." 1 Cor. chap. xv. is almost wholly on this subject. 1 Thes. iv. 14, 16. "If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." And Rev. xx. 12, 13. "I saw the dead small and great, stand before God: And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them." These are some of the many texts which we find in the New Testament, on the

subject of the resurrection of the dead ; and they abundantly prove the doctrine.

Several objections have been brought by cavillers and unbelievers against this doctrine ; but they seem to be founded on an ignorance, or on wrong notions, of the knowledge and power of God. It is certain that a God of infinite knowledge perfectly knows every particle of dust, which composed the bodies of his human creatures. And it is equally certain that he can separate from all other dust, that of each individual, wherever it may be placed, and whatever changes it may have passed through ; and bring it together again in a human form. He who could create all things at first out of nothing, can certainly form man again out of the dust, of which he was at first composed. Since therefore God can raise the dead, the only question is, will he do it ? This question he himself has answered, and has assured us that he will.

The resurrection will be universal, extending to all the dead, of every nation and of every age. Of this Christ has assured us John v. 28. " The hour is coming, in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." Not one of the countless millions of the dead, old or young, shall be forgotten or overlooked in that day.

With respect to those who shall then be found alive ; (for in that day there will be a generation living upon the earth) the Scriptures inform us that they shall be changed. 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. " Behold I show you a mystery ; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." The bodies of those who at that day are found alive, shall undergo a change similar to that effected by the resurrection.— The body after the resurrection, as we shall presently show, will differ much as to its qualities from what it was before death. In like manner will the bodies of those who are at that day found alive, be in a moment, so changed, as to differ much from what they were before, and be like unto the bodies which have been raised from the dust. All the dead shall rise, and the living shall be changed.

This resurrection and this change equally respect all mankind of whatever character, whether just or unjust;

but their condition, and the circumstances in which they shall appear will be very different, according to their different characters while in this world.

The bodies of the saints shall rise glorious, incorruptible, immortal, powerful, and spiritual. They shall rise *glorious.* 1 Cor. xv. 43. "It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." And Phil. iii. 21. "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." The bodies of the saints, which in this life were the prey of disease, and defiled by sin, and which at death sunk into corruption and dust, shall when raised again be free from loathsome disease, from moral pollution, and from death. They shall appear all over beautiful and glorious like the glorified body of the Saviour, which shall be the pattern after which they shall be formed. They shall be raised *incorruptible.* 1 Cor. xv. 42, 52, 53, 54. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. The dead shall be raised incorruptible. For this corruptible must put on incorruption. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption." Now the body is liable to corruption, and at death soon corrupts; but after the resurrection, it shall no more be liable to decay or dissolution. The bodies of the saints shall also be raised *immortal.* 1 Cor. xv. 53. "This mortal must put on immortality." Now their bodies are liable to death, and they carry within them the principles of dissolution; but after the resurrection, they shall no more be liable to death, and shall no more die—Again, they shall be raised in *power.* 1 Cor. xv. 43. "It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." The bodies of the saints which are now weak, shall then be endued with strength, far surpassing our present imaginations. They shall then be strengthened to behold the glory of the Saviour, which in their present state they could not sustain, and one view of which caused John in the Isle of Patmos to fall down as one dead. They shall be strengthened to bear up under that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, which awaits them, and which they could not now possibly bear. And they shall be rendered capable of performing motions and producing actions, far surpassing anything of which we now have any knowledge.—Once more, we are informed that the bodies of the saints shall be raised *spiritual.* 1 Cor. xv. 44. "It is sown a

natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." By this we are not to understand that the bodies of the saints will be immaterial. Spiritual here is not opposed to material. But we are to understand by it, that the bodies of the saints shall be greatly refined, and be fitted for the pure region of heaven, and to move perhaps with swiftness from one place to another, like spirits; and moreover that they shall be freed from their present wants and appetites, and have no more need of food, rest, sleep, or recreation; and also be fitted for spiritual exercises, and no more be clogs to their souls in the performance of duty, but helpers.

Far different will be the condition, in which the bodies of the wicked shall be raised. The qualities of their bodies also, will at the resurrection be very different, from what they now are. They will be raised in power, incorruptible, and immortal; but these qualities will be their curse. They will be strengthened to bear misery, which in their present state would soon, and immediately, terminate their lives. And they will be raised incorruptible and immortal, that they may never die; but forever endure the heavy wrath of God. They shall also be raised in dishonour; for they shall awake Dan. 12. 2. "to shame and everlasting contempt." As the bodies of the righteous will be raised beautiful and glorious, so we have reason to believe that the wicked will come forth of their graves, deformed, hideous, and contemptible in their appearance.

To the bodies both of the righteous and the wicked, thus raised, as we have described, shall the souls which once animated them, be again united. This is necessarily included in the doctrine of the resurrection; for it is certain that the body will not be raised, to continue a lifeless and inactive lump; but to be animated, and to act, and enjoy happiness or endure misery, according to its character in this life. The object of the resurrection is to bring the whole man to judgment, and to reward or punish the whole man; and therefore the soul and body must and will again be united. "The spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. xii. 33.) shall descend from heaven, and again enter into the bodies with which they were once united. This will be an inexpressibly joyful meeting. The love of the soul to the body is, in this life, ve-

ry strong. What an unspeakable source of joy, may we suppose it will therefore be to the soul, to re-enter its old habitation, highly improved, and beautified, freed from frailty, mortality, and sin, and fitted to be a help in the business of heaven, and to participate in its joys! Then will be sung that song of triumph. 1 Cor. xv. 54, 55, 57. "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And as the souls of the saints shall again be united to their bodies; so also shall the souls of the wicked. Hell shall deliver up its dead. The souls of the wicked, which ever since their death, have been in the bottomless pit enduring the second death, shall come forth and be re-united to their respective bodies. This will be a dreadful meeting to the soul, to be compelled again to be united to that body, the lusts and appetites of which helped destroy the soul, and which shall now increase its torment forever.

The souls and bodies, both of the righteous and the wicked, being united, the judgment shall succeed. Of this we shall treat in another discourse. When this important day shall come we know not. It is wisely hidden from us, that we may always be ready, and watch for the coming of the Lord. With respect to the generation which shall at that day be found living upon the earth, the Scriptures teach us there will be but few pious among them. After the thousand years of great prosperity which has been promised to the church, Satan is to be loosed again. Our Saviour speaking of the signs of the last day saith. Mat. xxiv. 12. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." And Luk. xviii. 8. "When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" It will also be a day of great security. Mankind generally will be pursuing their business and pleasures, thoughtless about the future, and as little expecting this day as they now are. Luk. xvii. 26—30. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark; and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot;

they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all; even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." They will then be saying to themselves "peace and safety." 1 Thes. v. 3. Yea many will then be scoffing and deriding the doctrine of the resurrection. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

In the midst of this general security and impiety will that day come. And it will suddenly burst forth, upon a careless and wicked world; as did the flood of waters in the days of Noah; and as did that dreadful storm of fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain, on the morning that Lot went out of Sodom. Mat. xxiv. 44. "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Mat. xxiv. 27. "For as the lightning cometh out of the East, and shineth even unto the West; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Luk. xxi. 35. "As a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." 1 Thes. v. 2, 3. "The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them."

This great—this dreadful—this delightful day, will be ushered in with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God. Thus we read 1 Cor. xv. 52. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound." And 1 Thes. iv. 16. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God." The sound of the last trump, which shall then be made will be awfully loud—far louder than ten thousand thunders. It will extend from one end of our world to the other; it will reach the deepest caverns of the grave throughout the vast regions of the dead; it will resound through heaven, and pierce the deepest recesses of the bottomless pit; it will move heaven, earth, and hell—all will be in commotion at the sound. Heaven will rejoice and shout for joy; for the day of the redemption

of the bodies of the saints, and the day of the manifestation of the glory of the Saviour has come. Hell will tremble; for the day of complete vengeance has arrived. And Oh! what surprize and consternation will seize our guilty world at that moment. Some will be engaged in the busy pursuits of life, laying and executing plans, for future wealth and honour, unapprehensive of the approach of this day, and unmindful of their eternal concerns.—Some will be drowned in sinful pleasures.—Some will be scoffing; and some sleeping. On a sudden the trumpet sounds—the earth is shaken—the heavens open—the Saviour appears. What inexpressible consternation and horror will in that moment seize a thoughtless world! Suppose the trumpet should this moment sound—What an awful consternation would it excite! It will be as much unexpected when it does sound. Terror inexpressible, and wild dismay will then seize our world in general; while a few here and there who have been looking for this glorious appearance of their Lord and Saviour, will hear the sound with joy.

Seeing then brethren that such scenes are before us, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness? We now hear the gentle and inviting sound of the gospel trump, proclaiming salvation to a ruined world. Let us listen to this sound and obey its call that we may be prepared to hear the sound of the last trumpet. Let us inquire of ourselves whether we are prepared to hear this solemn sound, and pass the test of that solemn day which it will introduce. Should the trumpet now sound, how would it find us? If we do not hear this call in our day, remember death is approaching. The call to die will soon be given; and it may be given as unexpectedly as the resurrection call. And as the call to return unto the dust finds us, so will the last trump find us. Let us all therefore continually watch, and be ready for the coming of the Lord.——Amen.

SERMON LIV.

JUDGMENT.

ROMANS XIV. 10. LAST CLAUSE.

"*We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*"

We have attended to the solemn doctrine of the general resurrection. This event will be only the beginning of the grand and awful solemnities of that great day. The universal *judgment* will follow.

The doctrine of the judgment is brought into view in our Catechism in the answer to the 38th question.

"*What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?*

At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity."

The doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, as the result of a sentence passed upon men after death, was, in some form or other believed by the Heathen; though they knew nothing of him who will really be the Judge, and had very confused and wrong notions of the true nature of those rewards and punishments which will be adjudged to men; and were also entirely ignorant of a day of judgment, on which the whole world should be collected together, before the judgment seat of Christ. Their sentiments, such as they were, respecting a future judgment, were either derived from the light of nature; or else they were the faint and confused traces of early revelation, which had been preserved and handed down by tradition. Most probably, they were derived from both these sources.

But what the Heathen did or could know on this subject, but very imperfectly and obscurely, Revelation has very clearly and distinctly made known unto us. Here we are assured of an universal judgment of the collected world, on a day appointed by God, for this purpose.

Here we are informed, who will be the Judge, and what will be the manner of his appearance. And here we have the judicial process described, and the final sentence expressly stated.

The doctrine of the universal judgment was very early revealed; for as Jude informs us (vers. 14, 15.) "Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied, saying, behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute *judgment upon all.*" In the Old Testament, we have a proof of a future judgment, Eccl. xi, 9. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into *judgment.*" And also Eccl. xii. 14. "God shall bring every work into *judgment*, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

But in the New Testament this doctrine is more explicitly and frequently taught; as in the following passages among others. Mat. xi. 22, 24. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the *day of judgment* than for you. It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the *day of judgment* than for thee." Mat. xii. 36, 42. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof *in the day of judgment.*" The queen of the South shall rise up in *the judgment*, with this generation, and shall condemn it." In the 25th chapter of Matthew, not only is the doctrine taught, but also the judicial process is described. Acts. xvii. 31. "He hath appointed a *day*, in the which he will *judge* the world in righteousness." 2 Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the *judgment seat* of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this *the judgment.*" And 2 Pet. iii. 7. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the *day of judgment.*" These are some of the texts in proof of the doctrine that there will be a day of universal judgment.

The doctrine being established, let us next enquire who will be the *Judge?* The Scriptures inform us that God will judge the world; but Christ himself hath told us,

John v. 22. "The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." Hence we learn that God the Son will execute the office of Judge of the world. This is clearly taught in many other passages some of which have already been quoted. It is taught in our text, "we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Also Acts x. 42. "It is He which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." Acts. xvii, 31 "He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that *Man*, whom he hath ordained." 2 Cor. v. 10. "We must all appear before the judgment seat of *Christ*." Rom. ii. 16. "God shall judge the secrets of men by *Jesus Christ*." And 2 Tim. iv. 1. "I charge thee before God, and the *Lord Jesus Christ*, *who* shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." Hence it is clearly evident, that the Mediator—the God Man Christ Jesus, acting in his mediatorial character, will, in the last great day, Judge the world.

The *manner* of his appearance will be awfully grand beyond description. It is set forth in Scripture in the most sublime manner of which human language is capable; but human language is inadequate to represent the grandeur of the scene. "The Son of man (saith he himself Mat. xxv. 31.) shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory." Luke ix. 26. "He shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." Mat. xxvi. 64. Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." "The Lord himself (saith Paul 1 Thes. iv. 16.) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 2 Thes. i. 7, 8. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels in flaming fire." "I beheld (saith Daniel vii. 9, 10.) till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him." "And, I saw (saith John Rev. xx. 11.) a great white throne, and

him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them." Such is the description given of the appearance of the Judge in that great day.

How different this appearance from that which he once made unto men! When he was seen in the form of a servant! When he lay an infant in the manger of Bethlehem! When he stood before the judgment bar of Pilate! And when he hung as a malefactor upon the cross! How will those then feel, who in the days of his flesh, refused to receive him as the promised Messiah, reproached and persecuted him, cried out against him, crucify him, crucify him, and condemned and put him to an ignominious death? How will those then feel who now when he is offered to them in the Gospel, neglect, or slight, or despise, or mock, or deny him? They will then still feel the same enmity and the same malice towards him, and his cause which they now do. But they must then attend to him. Every eye shall see him, and they too which have pierced him; and every ear must hear his voice. However they may hate and be filled with rage, they will not then be able to neglect, or slight, or despise, or mock, or ridicule or deny him as many now do; but filled with consternation, dread, and horror, they shall then call "to the mountains and rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?" Rev. vi. 16, 17. Then shall his divinity and the truth of his religion blaze forth upon scoffers and infidels, and force conviction upon them, to their eternal confusion. This is the person, my hearers, who is now preached to you as the Saviour of sinners. Be intreated, therefore, by the dread solemnities of his appearance, in that great day, now to listen to his offers of mercy, and secure him as your friend.

As to the *place* where the judgment will be held we can say but little. The Scriptures seem to intimate that the extensive region of the air will be the place of judgment. For the Apostle tells us that the saints "shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thes. iv. 17.

Before the throne of judgment, wherever it may be set, shall be gathered together that innumerable multitude

which are to be tried in that great day. The *persons* who shall compose the assembly, which shall in that day be collected before the judgment seat of Christ, to be tried by him, are angels and men. Whether the holy angels will be included among those whom Christ will judge in that day we know not. On this subject the Scriptures say nothing, and therefore it becomes us to be silent. But that fallen angels will make a part of those, who shall on that day be judged by Christ, the Scriptures clearly intimate. When Christ was upon earth and exercised his power over evil spirits, in casting them out from those possessed by them, they expostulated with him, saying, "art thou come hither to torment us before the time?" Mat. viii. 29. By which they evidently intimated, that they expected, Christ would at a set time, judge and condemn them to a fuller punishment than they then endured. And the day of judgment appears the most probable time for this. Besides the Apostle Peter tells us, 2 Peter ii. 4. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto *judgment*." And the apostle Jude, (vers. 6.) is still more express, "The angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the *judgment of the great day*." Hence it is evident that fallen angels, will make a part of that assembly, which shall in the judgment day, stand before the judgment seat of Christ. With these must be assembled all the children of men from Adam the first man down to the very last one of his numerous posterity. "We shall *all*"—all the human race, "stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Not one of the innumerable millions of our race, either old or young, shall be absent from that assembly in that great day.

The saints shall be collected together by the ministering angels, and by them be brought to the place of judgment. For our Saviour hath told us, Mat. xxiv. 31.—"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other."—The ministry of the holy angels, will also in that day extend to the wicked, and be exercised in collecting them before the judgment bar as prisoners to stand their trial,

and in executing upon them the sentence which shall be pronounced ; for we read, Mat. xiii. 40, 41, 42. "In the end of this world, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire."

Angels and men being thus assembled before the judgment seat of Christ, let us for a moment contemplate this vast assembly. Truly vast, beyond our computation or conception! one generation comprehends many millions. If but the inhabitants of one country were collected together, the sight would amaze us. But what are the inhabitants of one country, compared with all the inhabitants great and small. which live at once in all the numerous countries of our globe? And all this vast multitude compose but one generation. And what is one generation compared with the many generations, which have been in our world since the creation, and which shall yet rise into being down to the end of time? All these countless millions shall be present. To these add the unknown multitudes of fallen spirits, and of attending ministering holy angels, and an innumerable multitude of beings of other orders, and other worlds, which for ought we know, may, and probably will be present on this occasion, to behold the manifestation of the divine glory, and learn important lessons for the regulation of their conduct—how inconceivably vast this assembly! we are entirely lost in the contemplation! what an astonishing sight will this be! This sight, brethren, you and I shall behold—we shall make a part of that great assembly, and mingle in that vast crowd. And we shall not stand unnoticed, and gaze as indifferent spectators. We shall not be overlooked or lost among the multitude. The eye of the all-seeing Judge will be fixed upon us, as well as every individual of all that vast assembly; and we too must undergo the solemn trial, for which this great multitude was collected.

Let us now proceed to attempt a description of the trial which awaits the anxious countless millions assembled before the judgment seat of Christ. The first act of the Judge as far as we know will be the division of this vast assembly into two parts. When first assembled, it appears that all, whatever their character, will be promiscuously blended together. But at the command of the

Judge, they shall separate to the right and left. The righteous he will place on his right hand, and the wicked on his left. For he himself hath told us, Matt. xxv. 32, 33, "And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left."

This will be a solemn separation. We have seen affecting and solemn separations made in this world, when friends and relatives have parted from each other to dwell in distant countries; when the visible people of Christ have come out from the world, and collected around his table; and when friends have been parted by death. But these are not to be compared with the solemnity of the separation, which shall be made at the great day. In all these separations there was hope of meeting again; but here hope, the last refuge of the miserable, will die. The separation of the great day will be final and eternal.

And what strange discoveries will this separation make! Many will doubtless be compelled to take their stand among the trembling crowd on the left, who in this world belonged to the visible family of God, and called Christ Lord, Lord. To many such he will doubtless say in that day, I never knew you. Many will doubtless then be placed on the left, who now feel a confidence that all is well, and that then they will stand on the right; and even some, we have reason to fear, of whose piety others have now no doubt. And on the other hand, many who in this world walked in darkness and had scarcely any light; many who were humble, broken-hearted, trembling saints, and who scarcely dared to lay hold of the precious promises of God, and apply them to themselves for their comfort, but often looked forward with dread and sad forebodings to this day, and in prospect often placed themselves on the left; and many who were branded by the world as hypocrites, will in this division be placed on the right hand of the Judge.

And Oh! what affecting separations will in that day be made, among those who were here connected together by tender ties! We shall then see friend forever separated from friend; parents from children, and children from parents; brothers and sisters from each other; and even husband and wife who were here as one flesh.

This separation will be made according to the characters of men. The Judge will separate the sheep, that is the righteous, from the goats, or the wicked. To which ever of these classes persons belonged in this life, with that class will they be numbered in the great day. If they belonged to the sheep of Christ, they shall then be honoured with a station at his right hand; but if not they must be placed on the left. And taking the word of God as our guide, we may readily point out by character who will then stand on the right hand, and who on the left.

The happy company on the right are composed of those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb—of those who in this life were humble and contrite and trembled at the word of God—of those who were in earnest in religion, and agonized to enter in at the strait gate—of those who were born again by the Spirit of God, justified through faith in the Redeemer, and sanctified by his grace—of those who denied themselves, took up their cross, and followed Christ through evil as well as good report, and were not ashamed to own him in the midst of an adulterous and sinful generation—of those who were not conformed to this world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds, who came out from an ungodly world and were separate, and denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, lived soberly, righteously, and godly in the world—and of those who according to their ability and opportunity, from right principles, fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took in the stranger, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and went in unto those in prison. Such, though here they may have been poor and despised, and even unknown, shall in that great day be publicly owned by Christ, and be placed on his right hand.

But who compose that trembling crowd on the left, who filled with dread and horror, and covered with shame, are awaiting the judicial process, and their dreadful sentence. There we shall certainly see the drunkard, the profane swearer, the Sabbath breaker, the liar, the perjured, the unclean, the covetous, the extortioner, the envious, the malicious, the revengeful, and such like characters. There we shall certainly behold unbelievers, scoffers, and revilers. There we shall also find the unregenerate, the prayerless, the self-righteous, the formalist,

and the hypocrite. And there will doubtless stand, filled with horror, and covered with shame, those of you, who now hear me, to whom any of these characters belong, unless you speedily repent, and turn from your evil and false ways unto God.

O my people! where in that solemn and tremendous day will you and I be found? Among that blessed company on the right, or that wretched crowd on the left? Let this solemn question be deeply impressed upon our minds, let it habitually occupy our thoughts, and let its importance lead us to give all diligence to secure a place at the right hand of Christ.

But, we have reason to fear, that after all the solemn calls and warnings you have had, there will be a sad separation in this congregation, and in many of the families that compose it, in that day; and that many of you will then, while you see your friends on the right, be placed among the wretched multitude on the left hand of the Judge. I beseech you, who are yet out of Christ, pause in your thoughtless and sinful career. Think of judgment, and prepare for the solemn events of that great day.

Our time requires us here to pause, until a future opportunity.

SERMON LV.

JUDGMENT.

ROMANS xiv. 10. LAST CLAUSE.

"*We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*"

The separation being made between the righteous and the wicked, the *trial* will commence.

The *object* of a trial will be, not to bring to the knowledge of the Judge, any thing of which he was before ignorant; for he is omniscient, and perfectly knoweth

the character,—even the most secret actions, and every thought of each individual of all the vast multitude assembled before him; but the object will be to manifest the divine glory to the assembled universe; to show forth, especially the justice of God in the punishment of the wicked, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world of impenitent sinners fully appear guilty before him, and justly deserving of that punishment which he will inflict upon them; also fully to exhibit the riches of his grace and mercy in the salvation of his people; and further, to vindicate the injured honour of the Saviour, and display his mediatorial glory before the assembled universe. For these important purposes will men and angels, assembled before the judgment seat of Christ, be brought to a particular trial, for their conduct.

The *manner* in which the trial will be conducted in the great day, bears, according to the Scriptures, a resemblance to the manner of proceeding in human courts. The judge is seated on the bench or judgment seat; the persons to be tried are brought before him; an indictment is read, which supposes an existing and declared law, to be broken by the persons at the bar; witnesses are introduced to prove or disprove the charges; and upon the evidence given, the persons are acquitted or condemned. To this form of proceeding there appears to be an allusion in the account which the Scriptures give us, of the trial which will take place in the great day, before the judgment seat of Christ. For they teach us that Christ shall sit upon the throne of his glory, or his judgment seat; that all nations shall be gathered before him; that the books shall be opened, and the dead be judged out of those things written in the books according to their works; and they seem to intimate the introduction of witnesses to bear testimony.

The opening of the books in that day is spoken of both by Daniel, and by John in the Revelation. "The judgment was set (saith Daniel) and the *books were opened.*" Dan. vii. 10. "I saw (saith John) the dead, small and great stand before God; *and the books were opened;* and another *book was opened*, which is *the book of life;* and the dead were judged out of those things which were written *in the books*, according to their works." Rev. xx. 12. The books which shall be opened may here refer, either

to the rule or law, by which men shall be judged; or to the evidence which shall be adduced relative to their cause, or to both.

The *rule* or *law*, which will be the standard of judgment, will be that portion of the will of God and their duty which the persons on trial knew or might have known. Where little has been given, little will be required; and where much has been given, much will be required. This is certainly an equitable principle. And that men will be judged according to this rule, the Scriptures clearly teach. Luk. xii. 47, 48. "That servant, which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

The Heathen will in that day be judged by the rule of the law of nature. They will not have to give an account how they have obeyed or disobeyed God's revealed word, for this they had never made known unto them; but only how they have obeyed the law of nature, or those duties, which, the works of God, the relations which creatures sustain to each other, and reason and conscience teach. That the Heathen will be judged by the law of nature alone, and not by the written word of God, the Apostle teacheth when he saith, speaking of the Gentiles Rom. ii. 12. "As many have sinned without law," that is without the revealed law, "shall also perish without law;" that is, without that aggravated punishment which awaits those, who perish from under the revealed word of God.

Those who have enjoyed the revealed word of God, will, in addition to the rule of the law of nature, be judged according to this rule. As we learn from Rom. ii. 12, "As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law." And the account of those who have lived under Revelation, will be the greater or less according as the portion of light, which they enjoyed from this source was the more or less full. The Jews who lived under the Old Testament dispensation, will have to give an account of their improvement of the light afforded under that dispensation; and they who have lived under the New Testament dispensation, will have to give an account of their

improvement of all the additional light and motives afforded under this dispensation. And great indeed will be the account which those will have to render who live under the light of the Gospel. They will not only with the Heathen have to give an account of their improvement of the light of nature, which they enjoyed equally with them; and with the Jews, of their improvement of the Scriptures of the Old Testament which they enjoyed in common with them; but in addition to these, of their improvement of the light of the Gospel and this light compared with both the former is like the bright effulgence of a meridian sun, compared with the glimmering of the stars, or the faint light of the first dawn of morning. And dreadful indeed will be the account of those who in the great day are found at the left hand of the Judge from under Gospel light.

This light brethren we enjoy. We live under the Gospel dispensation, and in a land where the Gospel is promulgated. If we are not acquainted with it, the fault is our own; for we have the means; and ignorance in our circumstances will form no excuse in the day of account. Peculiarly dreadful will be our situation, if in that day, we should be found at the left hand of the Judge. Let the wicked among us hear the declarations, of the infallible truth of God on this subject and tremble. Our Saviour speaking of the Jews who rejected him said, John xv. 22. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." In this passage he plainly teaches, that sin under Gospel light, is so much greater than sin where this light is not enjoyed, that the latter is lost in comparison with the former. Again we hear him saying, Mat. xi. 21—24. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of

judgment than for thee." John iii. 19. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." These are alarming declarations, and they apply directly to us and ought therefore to awaken and alarm the secure among us. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon and Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for us, if we should perish. O think of this ye who continue impenitent under Gospel light. Think of the day of judgment, and of the peculiarly dreadful situation, in which you will be placed in that day, if you continue to sustain your present character.

Further, all the privileges, means and opportunities we have enjoyed will be brought into the account. We must answer for every talent with which we have been entrusted. If we have been endowed with a good natural understanding, if we have received an education, if we have lived in affluence, if we have been entrusted with offices in church or state, if we have been favoured with a religious education, if we have enjoyed the stated means of grace, if we have lived under a powerful ministry, if we have been frequently warned by afflictions, if we have lived in seasons of revivals of religion; for all these privileges, means, and opportunities, or any of them, or any others which we may have enjoyed, we shall be called to give an account in the day of judgment. And more will be expected from us than from those who have not been thus favoured; and our condemnation will be the greater, if after all, we should be found at the left hand of the Judge. O brethren! what a great account will you and I have to render! for we are truly exalted to heaven in point of privileges; and what a peculiarly dreadful hell will ours be, if we should be lost! Let us be deeply sensible of our situation, and so improve our privileges as to be able to render up a good account at last.

If it be asked for *what portion of their conduct* in life men must give an account? The Scriptures plainly answer this question, and teach us that they must give an account for every thing they have done. Eccl. xii. 14. "God shall bring *every work* into judgment, with *every secret thing*, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Mat. xii. 36. "*Every idle word* that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." For every work

which we have done, whether good or evil; for every idle word, (and we have reason to fear we speak many every day;) and even for every secret thing, which will embrace the thoughts of our hearts, our desires, and every exercise of our souls, as well as those actions which are concealed from the world—we must give an account in the day of judgment. What strange discoveries will the day of judgment make! What black intentions! what foul desires! what sinister motives! and what impure thoughts will this day unfold! What secret crimes! what works of darkness! and what deeds of deception, and fraud. and theft, and uncleanness, and slander, and lying, and murder, will then be brought to light! And what confusion will then seize and overwhelm the perpetrators of secret crimes! How will the hypocrite, who in this world, made religion a veil to conceal his crimes, be overwhelmed in that day, when the veil shall be torn from him, and all his foul deeds of hypocrisy be exposed before the assembled universe. "There is nothing covered (saith our Saviour, Luke xii. 2, 3,) that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the house tops." Think of this, ye who are covered with secret crimes, which you have carefully concealed from the world. They are all known to God, and they will one day be exposed before the world. If but one of your secret crimes were told you before a few of your fellow creatures, the tale would confuse and overwhelm you. What then will your feelings be, when not only one, but all your secret deeds of wickedness shall be published in your presence, before all your fellow men, and also before angels and your Judge? Truly the state of the wicked in that day is aptly represented in Daniel, when it is said that they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. xii. 2. Let us always when tempted to secret sin, think of the judgment day, and remember that then God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.

Further, every good work will in that day be brought to light, as well as every evil one. And what discoveries will also be made in this respect! Many characters which are now slandered and unjustly traduced, will then be

cleared up; many motives which are now impeached, will then appear to have been upright; many good desires and intentions, which for want of power to execute them, were never brought to light, will then be manifested; and many noble deeds of benevolence, which were carefully concealed from the world, will then be published.

And here while on the subject of the things which will be brought into judgment, and the discoveries which will be made in the day of judgment, a question is suggested whether the sins of the saints will in that day be published? Some suppose they will not, as they are all forgiven in Christ; and as the Scriptures represent them as blotted out, covered, cast into the depths of the sea, and remembered no more. Others suppose they will be published, in order to manifest before the assembled universe, the glory of that grace which has pardoned them. And this latter opinion seems to be clearly supported, by that text already quoted, Eccl. xii. 14, "God shall bring *every* work into judgment, with *every* secret thing, whether it be *good*, or whether it be *evil*."—Be this however as it may, it is certain the sins of the saints will not be alledged against them to their condemnation; neither will they be published to their disgrace or confusion.

The truth of what is alledged for or against each individual, we are authorized to believe will be *proved* by *evidence*, and such evidence as will place it beyond all doubt. Men who have been companions in wickedness, will probably be compelled to bear testimony against each other. They who have warned the wicked, and all who have been acquainted with their wicked deeds, will probably be called to bear testimony against them; and in like manner all who have been acquainted with the good actions of the righteous will probably be called to bear testimony to them. Angels also, as in the execution of their office of ministering spirits, they have been much conversant with our world, will probably be called to bear testimony. And even inanimate nature is represented as bearing testimony against the wicked, James v. 1, 3, 4, "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a *witness* against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the

labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth." God himself will also be a witness. Mal. iii. 5. "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift *witness* against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me saith the Lord of hosts." The divine omniscience is probably one of those books, which it is said will be opened in that day. This is a figurative expression intended to denote the perfect acquaintance of God with all the actions of his creatures. The divine testimony to the actions of men, will establish the truth with respect to them beyond all doubt; since he cannot either be deceived himself, or deceive others. And with the testimony of the divine omniscience, will agree that of conscience. Conscience, however its voice may now be disregarded, or however it may now be lulled to sleep, or seared as with a hot iron, will then be awaked to perform its office; and its voice must then be heard; and it will bear its testimony to the truth of the charges brought against the wicked. And they will stand convicted, not only by the testimony of men and angels, and of God himself; but also by the testimony of their own consciences. They will be self-convicted and self-condemned; and thus every mouth will be stopped, and the whole world of the ungodly stand guilty before God.

How long a *time* this trial will occupy we know not. The time is called in Scripture a day; but by this we are most probably to understand not a common day, but a season of time, as the term is sometimes used in Scripture.

The trial being ended and the characters of men fairly brought to light, what remains will be to pronounce and execute the *sentence.* This will be *pronounced* according to the characters of men. They that have done good will be acquitted, and they whose works have been evil will be condemned. Sentence will be pronounced according to the works of men. This is abundantly evident from the following texts of Scripture. John v. 28, 29. "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have *done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have *done evil*, unto the resurrection of damnation." Ps. lxii.

12. "Thou renderest to every man *according to his work*." Prov. xxiv. 12. "Shall not he render to every man *according to his works*." Mat. xvi. 27. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; and then he shall reward every man *according to his works*." Rom. ii. 6. "Who will render to every man *according to his deeds*." Rev. ii. 23. "I will give unto every one of you *according to your works*." Rev. xx. 12, 13. "The dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works*. And they were judged every man *according to their works*." And Rev. xxii. 12. "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man *according as his work* shall be."—The wicked will be punished *according* to their works, and *for* their works too. The sentence which will be pronounced upon them will be their just desert. And the righteous will be rewarded, also *according* to their works, but not *for* their works. Their salvation will all be of free grace; and their reward will be of grace and not of debt. If they were to be dealt with according to law, they would be condemned and perish; but Christ has answered the demands of the law for them, and they are saved by grace through his righteousness. But works will be the evidence of their interest in that righteousness; and the works of the wicked will also be the evidence of their want of an interest in that righteousness. Hence, works will be the rule according to which sentence will be pronounced; and in vain do any hope to be acquitted by Christ whose works are evil.

The different *sentences* which will be pronounced, we have contained in Mat. xxv. Sentence will first be pronounced upon the righteous. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." How transporting will this sentence be! With what joy and rapture will it fill the saints! They are acquitted! they are invited near the King of saints as his favorites! they are called blessed, and blessed of the Father! an inheritance is awarded them, even a kingdom! and this too prepared for them long before they had an existence; even from the foundation of the world! Who of us my brethren will be so unspeakably blessed, as to belong to the happy number, who shall receive this blessed sentence?

But O! what a different sentence remains to be pronounced! "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."—Awful sentence! Every word is emphatical and big with terror! To be banished from the source of happiness! to be forced away, pronounced accursed, and with the heavy curse of the Almighty resting upon them! to be doomed to fire, and everlasting fire! and this too, prepared, made ready by the Almighty God to punish his enemies! and prepared for his worst enemies, even the devil and his angels! Who can endure such a sentence as this! And is there not danger, that some of you, my hearers, will receive this sentence? Remember it will be pronounced on all workers of iniquity, and on all who are not united to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith in him. Are there any such in this assembly? You are warned of your danger. Take warning and flee from the wrath that is to come. It is now a time of mercy. Christ now invites you to come unto him by faith and be saved; but if you now turn a deaf ear to his invitations, you must then hear from his lips the awful sound—depart.

Sentence being pronounced, the *execution* thereof will follow. These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." Mat. xxv. 46. The wicked, with devils, now their deceivers, but then their tormentors, must go away from all happiness, down to unspeakable misery, which shall never end. But the righteous shall enter with Christ into that perfect, unspeakable, and eternal blessedness, which he has purchased and prepared for them.

What will then become of our world, we know not, except that the Scriptures inform us, 2 Pet. iii. 10. 11. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up—all these things shall be dissolved."

I conclude this solemn subject with the exhortation of the Apostle Peter, (2 Pet. iii. 14,) "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless."—AMEN.

SERMON LVI.

HELL.

MATTHEW XXV. 46. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment.*"

We have in former discourses attended to the solemn transactions of the judgment day; and have heard the different sentences which will then be pronounced upon the righteous and upon the wicked. To the righteous, the Judge will say, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Mat. xxv. 34. But to the wicked, he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire. prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. xxv. 41. Our text, with the rest of the verse, contain the execution of these sentences. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.

From the description given by our Saviour in the 25th chapter of Matthew, of the proceedings of the judgment day, it appears, that sentence will first be pronounced upon the righteous; but that the sentence pronounced upon the wicked, will be first executed. To treat of the *punishment* of the *wicked*, will therefore be the first in order. This is the subject of our text. "These"—that is the persons who in the judgment day will be placed on the left hand of the Judge, and after a full and impartial trial will be proved to be wicked; and on whom the sentence will be pronounced, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,"—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

This brethren is a dreadful subject, and one which the wicked generally dislike to hear. But it makes a part of

that system of truth, which God has thought proper to reveal; and of that whole counsel of God, which it is my duty, not to shun to declare unto you. And it is important that the truth in our text, dreadful as it is, should be declared, that the wicked may be warned of their danger, and be persuaded by the terrors of the Lord, while there is yet hope, to flee from the wrath to come.

The future punishments of the wicked, may be divided into those of *loss*, and those of *sense*.

1. The wicked shall suffer the *loss* of all good. This is included in the sentence, "depart from me;" and in the account which our text gives of its execution—"these shall go away." They shall depart or go away from God, which signifies, not only a banishment from his presence; but also a total exclusion from his favour. In this life, the wicked, though God is angry with them every day, and though they taste something of his wrath, are nevertheless the subjects of many mercies; and all these mercies flow originally from God. But in hell, being banished from the presence and favour of God, they shall be deprived of all the comforts they enjoyed in this life; and besides, they shall lose all the joys of heaven. After the day of judgment, the wicked shall no more stand in the congregation of the righteous. The crown of righteousness and glory, reserved in heaven for the saints, they shall never wear. The kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world, they shall never inherit. On the golden pavements of the New Jerusalem, their feet shall never stand. That house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; and those mansions which the Saviour hath gone to prepare, they shall never occupy. In that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, they shall have no part. Of those living pleasures which are at God's right hand evermore, they shall never partake. That rest which remaineth for the people of God, they shall never enter. And with the blessed society of heaven, they shall never associate. All this happiness, they must lose; and from all these joys they must forever depart. And they will also be excluded from all hope. In this world, in the midst of the greatest distresses, hope of better days is a great support and comfort; but then hope, the last refuge of the miserable, will die.

2. The future misery of the wicked will consist, not

only in a punishment of loss, but also of *sense*. They shall not only be deprived of all good, but shall also endure a positive misery; and shall have a sense or feeling of the most exquisite torments.

The place where the wicked shall be punished is called in Scripture by several names, expressive of its dreadfulness. It is called a "prison," 1 Pet. iii. 19; "the bottomless pit," Rev. xx. 1; "a furnace of fire," Rev. xiii. 42; "a lake of fire burning with brimstone," Rev. xix. 20, "Hell," Luk. xvi. 23; and, "outer darkness," Mat. viii. 12.

The torments of the wicked in this place, are described in Scripture, in the strongest language, and by the most dreadful images. Let us attend to the description of these torments given in the word of God.

The wicked shall there continually endure the agonies of death: for their punishment is repeatedly called *death*, and the *second death*. They shall be forever dying, or forever enduring the agonies of death, and yet never die. Some of you have seen persons, writhing and struggling for an hour or a day in the agonies of death. Suppose these agonies continued without intermission, and without end, and you may have a faint idea of the second death, or the punishment, which in hell awaits the wicked. Fain would the wicked die, and thus end their torment; but this favour will be denied them.

The torments of the wicked are also represented by *darkness*—as we read, Mat. xxii. 13, "Then said the King to the servants, bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness"—and Mat. xxv. 30; "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." This will probably be literally true. And further, the Scriptures probably intended hereby to express, the horror of mind, of which darkness is a fit emblem. No ray of hope will there ever beam upon the soul; but complete despair will forever reign. And as though simple darkness was not strong enough to express the gloom, and horror, and despair of the wicked in hell, the word *outer* or *utter* is added to show that the darkness will be extreme. And it is elsewhere said, "to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever." 2 Pet. ii. 17. And as though, this still was not strong enough to express the horror and despair of the wicked in hell, in another place,

it is said of them, "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Jude 13.

The torments of the wicked are also represented, very frequently, by *fire*. The rich man in hell, cried—"send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame." Luk. xvi. 24. And we elsewhere read—"He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Mat. iii. 12. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire. Mat. xiii. 41, 42. "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire. Mat. xxv. 41. "Whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx. 15. "He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone—and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever." Rev. xiv. 10, 11. In all these and several other texts, the future punishment of the wicked is represented by fire.

It has been made a question, whether these expressions are to be taken literally or figuratively; that is, whether there will be a material fire into which the wicked shall be cast; or whether, as the pain occasioned by fire is most acute, the word is not used in application to the future punishment of the wicked, to express its extreme greatness. The solution of this question, could it be solved, would be of small importance to us; for these expressions certainly teach, that whether there be a material fire or not, the punishment of the wicked will be exceedingly great, like to the pain occasioned by fire. And it is worthy of particular attention, that very strong expressions are used to set forth the extreme heat of this fire, or the extremity of the torment, which the wicked shall endure. It is a fire *prepared*, a *furnace* of fire, a *lake burning* with fire and *brimstone*, and an *unquenchable* fire, into which the wicked shall be *cast*, so that they shall be overwhelmed and tormented in every part. Were you compelled to hold only your finger for a few minutes in a common fire, the pain would be almost insupportable. What then would be the pain endured if the whole body were exposed to the fire? And still more if cast into a furnace of fire, and a lake of fire and brimstone, and there forbid to die? The pain would be great beyond all conception. Such will be the sufferings of the wicked.

Again, the punishment of the wicked is represented in Scripture by a *worm* that *dieth not*—as we read, Mark ix, 44, "Where their worm dieth not." By the worm that dieth not, we are to understand a guilty conscience. However it may now be lulled to sleep, or seared as with a hot iron, conscience will then be awaked to perform its office. The sinner's crimes will be set in order before him; they will be recalled to his recollection, and conscience will continually upbraid and sting his soul at their remembrance; and "a wounded spirit who can bear?" Prov xviii. 14. When the sinner looks back, and views his crimes with all their aggravations; when he considers how many opportunities he had to escape misery, and how many calls and warnings he received; when he recollects for what he slighted them, and for what he lost his soul; and when he looks forward, and can discover no end to his miseries—surely the stings of conscience must be dreadful. Of the dreadfulness of this ingredient in future misery, we may form some faint idea, from what we see some suffer in this life, when their consciences are awaked to a sense of their guilt and danger.

Again, the wicked are represented as covered with *shame* and *everlasting contempt.* "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake—some to shame and everlasting contempt." Dan xii. 2. They will be disgraced in the eyes of all holy beings, and also in the eyes of their companions in misery, and in their own opinion of themselves. And they will be despised by God, by angels, and by saints; and we have reason to believe also by devils and by one another.

Further the miseries of the wicked are represented by *weeping*, and *wailing*, and *gnashing of teeth.* As we read Mat. viii. 12. "The children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." And Mat. xiii. 42. "And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." They shall weep under an exquisite sense of their present torments. They shall wail or lament over their folly, which brought them to this place of torment. And they shall gnash their teeth with pain, and with envy at the happiness of the righteous of which they will be sensible, and with rage and malice against God

and one another, and through despair under a sense of their helpless and hopeless condition.

Once more, the *society* of the wicked in hell will greatly aggravate their misery. The wicked will there be associated, not only with each other; but also with the devil and his angels. For they will be sentenced to "depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Mat. xxv. 41. Devils will there be their tormentors; for if they now delight in destroying them, and bringing them to that place of torment, they will doubtless then delight in tormenting them. And wicked men also will there torment one another. For they will mingle together, with all those dreadful passions which they possess, let loose, and inflamed, and unrestrained by those checks which now keep them within some bounds. Amidst all the restraints under which wicked men now are, they often greatly torment one another. What will they then do hereafter, when their wicked propensities and passions will be greatly increased, and the restraints under which they now are be removed?

Such, my hearers, is the scriptural account of the future torments of the wicked. Of these torments there will doubtless be different *degrees*. Though the very least degree which shall be endured will be unspeakably dreadful; yet a greater degree of punishment will doubtless be inflicted on some than on others. The greatest sinners all circumstances considered, will be punished with a greater misery, than those who came short of them in sin. This is an equitable principle; and the Scriptures frequently teach that this will be the case. It is taught in the following passage, Luk. xii. 47, 48. "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." The greater abilities and opportunities persons have to know the will of God, and their duty; and the longer they enjoy them, the greater, if they perish, will be their misery. What an awakening consideration should this be to us! For we are exalted to heaven in point of privileges. And if we should perish, we must have our portion in the hottest regions of the infernal

world. Let this dreadful thought have its due weight upon our minds.

The future misery of the wicked, whether it be greater or less, will, we have reason to believe, be in all complete. All will be full of torment, though the capacity of some to bear it, will be greater than that of others; as in vessels of greater and less dimensions, all may be equally full, and yet some contain more than others. All these miseries will be *without intermission.* For we are told, "they have no rest day nor night." Rev. xiv. 11. If they might have, now and then, a short respite from pain, or only a short mitigation, it would be a great relief. But they shall not have an hour's or a moment's relief or mitigation. On the contrary, it is probable, their capacities for torment, and their torments themselves will continually increase.

And what is of all others the most terrible consideration is, that all this unspeakably dreadful torment will be *eternal* or strictly without end. For, as our text declares, "these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." Here the same word is used in the original, to express the duration of the misery of the wicked, as in the latter clause of the verse is used to express the duration of the happiness of the righteous. "But the righteous into life *eternal.*" Numerous texts of Scripture might be quoted to establish the same point, that the duration of the misery of the wicked will be strictly without end. But as we have already particularly attended to the proofs of this doctrine, when treating of the misery of that estate into which the fall brought mankind, we shall not here dwell upon this point.

Review now, brethren, this dreadful subject.—What an unspeakably and inconceivably terrible punishment awaits the wicked! To be separated from all the little happiness they enjoyed in this life! To be banished from God, and excluded from his presence and favour! To be shut out of heaven, and denied its blessedness! To be shut up in the bottomless pit of hell! To be always enduring the agonies of death, and yet forbid to die! To be cast into outer darkness, and the mist of darkness, and the blackness of darkness—the victims of horror and despair! To be plunged into a lake burning with fire and brimstone! To be unceasingly harrassed

with the worm that dieth not—a guilty conscience! To be covered with shame and everlasting contempt! To be continually weeping and wailing and gnashing the teeth! To be associated with devils, and fellow damned spirits! To endure all this torment without a moment's relief or mitigation—no rest, day or night! And all this too, without a gleam of hope that the misery will ever terminate! Who can endure such wretchedness! We can now scarcely bear to hear of it. The recital makes us shudder. What then will it be to experience it?

And are any of you, my hearers, in danger of all this unspeakably dreadful misery? Look into the word of God, and you may there find the characters drawn for whom it is prepared. If any of these characters belong to you, you are in danger. Thou art the man or the woman who shall soon experience all this torment, unless you speedily repent, and by faith flee to Christ for refuge from the wrath to come.

The unbeliever, the scoffer, and the reviler; the profane who dare now to trifle with the name of God and with damnation; the blasphemer, the perjured, the Sabbath breaker, the disobedient to parents, the malicious, the revengeful, the unforgiving, the murderer, the drunkard, the unclean, the unjust, the extortioner, the oppressor, the thief, the liar, the backbiter, and the covetous; the prayerless, the unregenerate, the impenitent, the self-righteous, the formalist, and the hypocrite. All these, and such like characters, are in danger; and unless they repent, believe in Christ, and live new and holy lives, they will assuredly have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.—If any of these characters belong to any of you, you are in danger.

I beseech you, my hearers, to pause and consider. Do not turn away from this subject; and shocked at its dreadfulness, or disgusted with the preacher for thus wounding your ears, and attempting to disturb your peace, refuse to consider your state and danger. I have told you the plain truths of God's word, in the very language in which he has thought proper to have them recorded; and you must hear these truths now, and profit by them, or you must feel them forever hereafter. Be wise therefore, and examine yourselves carefully, that you may know whether

you are in danger or not. Can you dwell with devouring fire? Can you endure everlasting burnings? Can you bear the miseries which have been but faintly described? Will you risk these torments for the momentary pleasures of sin?

O think of that tremendous word, *forever.* You are sometimes almost distracted with a pain in a single member for an hour or a night. How long and insupportable does a single night appear, when you are in this condition? With what anxiety do you look for the morning, hoping that with it may come relief? With what solicitude do you inquire after the hour of the night? Can you then endure to be tormented with inexpressibly greater pain than any of you ever felt in this life, not merely in one part, or one member, but in all your members, and in every part, both soul and body? And this too without a moment's intermission, and without end? In vain will you there look for morning. For there is the blackness of darkness forever. Not a ray of hope that you will ever be relieved, will ever beam upon your soul. When you have spent millions of millions of ages, in indescribable anguish, should you ask the hour of the night, the answer would be—*forever.* When you have passed again through the same long period, should you repeat your question, still you would receive the same answer—*forever;* and will be as far from the termination of your misery, as you were the first moment it commenced.

O my hearers! the subject is overwhelming! It is painful to dwell upon it! From those slippery places on which you stand, where you are every moment in danger of sinking into the fiery gulf below, let me direct and hasten you to a place of safety. You are yet prisoners of hope. God is still waiting to be gracious. He is now exhorting you to flee from the wrath to come. He is now saying to you, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Christ the Saviour is now inviting you to him for protection and safety. Flee to him by faith, without delay. If you would escape, lose no time. Escape quickly. Escape for thy life. You are walking on the brink of eternal ruin, and the next step you take forward in your present course, your feet may slide, and you plunge

into the fiery gulf; and then you will be irrecoverably lost, forever, May the God of mercy and power make you sensible of your danger, and induce you to flee from the wrath to come, to the refuge revealed in his word.—AMEN.

SERMON LVII.

HEAVEN.

MATTHEW XXV. 46. LAST CLAUSE.

"*But the righteous into life eternal.*"

WE have considered the misery to which the wicked shall be doomed at the judgment day. This was a dreadful subject. A more pleasing one now claims our attention—the happiness on which the righteous shall in that day enter.

The righteous having, in the general judgment, been separated from the wicked; and openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall receive the joyful sentence, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Having received this blessed sentence, they will be present to hear the dreadful sentence, which shall immediately after be pronounced upon the wicked; and will, we have reason to believe, be eye witnesses of the execution of this sentence. They will see the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, and will approve of their doom; and to this approbation we are most probably to refer, what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?"

The wicked having gone away into everlasting punishment, and the smoke of their torment having begun to ascend up forever and ever—the righteous shall follow their Redeemer, from the place of judgment, into the glorious

kingdom just given to them; and which had been prepared for them from the foundation of the world, where they shall enjoy eternal life.

All the happiness of heaven is in our text included in this expression, "*life eternal.*"

We shall endeavour, in the ensuing discourse, to describe the *happiness of heaven.*

But in comparison of the reality, it is but little we can say on this subject. For "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Cor. ii. 9. "Now we see through a glass darkly." 1 Cor. xiii. 12. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John iii. 2. And the glory of heaven is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Cor. iv. 17.

Besides if it were not expressly taught, that the glory, prepared for the saints in heaven, is exceedingly great, beyond the description or conception of mortals in their present state, we must conclude it to be so from the considerations of, by whom, and by what means, and for whom, and for what purposes it was prepared. It was prepared by the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate and co-equal Son of God. It is a purchased possession, the price of which was his own blood. It was prepared for his favourites, whom he loved before the foundation of the world, with a love stronger than death, and whom he delighteth to honour. And it was prepared for the purpose of manifesting his own mediatorial glory and the glory of his Father. From all these considerations we must conclude, that the happiness of heaven exceeds any thing which in our present state we can express or conceive.

But notwithstanding all the descriptions we can give of the happiness of heaven must be very faint indeed compared with the reality; yet from the word of God we may know something of it, and enough to ravish our souls, and convince us that all terrestrial glory and happiness are as nothing in comparison.

We proceed to attempt a description of the happiness of heaven.

1. The eternal life which awaits the righteous, includes an entire *freedom from sin.* This is proved by the two following passages. Eph. v. 27. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle,

or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." And, Rev. xxi. 27. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." That this freedom from sin will be an unspeakably great happiness, the righteous even now know. For sin is now one of their greatest troubles; and one of their greatest desires is, to be delivered from it. They now often groan on account of the strength of their indwelling corruptions, which when they would do good, frequently cause evil to be present with them. It was sin that caused Paul to complain, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But in heaven sin shall no more vex the righteous. Their souls shall be perfectly purified from every corruption. No more shall they stray from the path of God's commandments. No more shall sinful or idle words issue from their lips; and no more shall sinful thoughts or desires occupy their souls.

And as they shall be freed from sin in themselves, so also shall they be freed from the grief they now experience from beholding the sins of others. This is now the cause of no small grief to the people of God. "Lot," we are told was in Sodom, "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8. And David said, Ps. cxix. 53, 136, 158, "Horror hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word."—These are the feelings, in a greater or less degree, of every true child of God. They grieve on account of the iniquities which they see practised around them. But in heaven, sinners shall not stand in the congregation of the righteous." Ps. i. 5. There all the inhabitants shall be perfectly freed from sin; and the holy souls of the righteous shall no more be vexed with beholding it in those with whom they associate.

2. The righteous shall also in heaven be *freed* from all *temptation* to sin. Satan cannot enter there with his temptations; neither can wicked men enter there to entice them to sin; and none of those inward corruptions

which now prove such a fruitful source of temptation shall there exist. The righteous will therefore have nothing to tempt them in heaven. Temptations are now a fruitful source of misery, as christians well know. Deliverance from them will therefore be a great happiness.

3. In that eternal life which awaits the saints in heaven is included an entire *freedom* from all *misery* or the penal consequences of sin. Death entered into the world by sin. All misery is the consequence of sin. When therefore the saints not only have all their sins pardoned, but also are entirely delivered from sin, a deliverance from all misery will naturally follow. And the Scriptures inform us, "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." Rev. vii. 16. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Rev. xxi. 4. "And there shall be no more curse." Rev. xxii. 3. From the numerous evils to which the saints are now subjected, they shall then be entirely delivered. The tongue of calumny will no more assail their character. They will suffer no more from poverty or oppression. No more will painful and loathsome diseases attack their bodies. No more will they be called to endure the heart-rending pangs of parting with dear friends. No more will they have to contend with the king of terrors, or be in bondage and tremble through fear of his approach. And no more will they be distressed with those gloomy doubts and fears concerning the safety of their state; or feel those painful anxieties about what is to become of them at last, which many now experience. In heaven the former things are all passed away. All misery of every kind, whether of body or mind shall be entirely excluded that happy place.

> "*Pains and groans and griefs and fears,*
> "*And death itself shall die.*"

But heaven is not a place of mere negative happiness. The saints shall not only there be freed from all sin and temptation and misery; but shall be positively, and perfectly holy and happy. Hence we observe,

4. *Perfection in holiness* will make a part of the happiness of heaven. "Ye are come, (saith Paul, Heb. xii 22, 23,) to the spirits of just men made perfect." "I shall be satisfied (saith the Psalmist, Ps. xvii. 15.) when I awake with thy likeness." "When he shall appear (saith 1 John iii. 2.) we shall be like him." The saints will then be perfectly conformed to the image of God. A perfectly filial temper will dwell in their hearts. They will be perfectly conformed to the will of God, and will always choose, with readiness and delight, that which is pleasing to him; and with delight and alacrity will ever render obedience to his will. The saints, being thus perfectly holy, must be happy and glorious. Holiness is necessary to happiness, and the holy must be happy. And they must be glorious too; for holiness is the highest ornament of a rational creature.

5. The *residence* of the saints will be most glorious. They shall inhabit "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi. 10. All the ancient great cities of our world, have, one after another, been overturned, or have sunk into ruins by the decays of time; but the heavenly city hath immoveable foundations, and shall never be overturned or decay. For stability, beauty, and glory, it is worthy its builder, who is God. A description of this city we have, Rev. xxi. 10, &c. where the most splendid images with which we are acquainted are used to set forth its glory. "And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem—having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as chrystal. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof—and—there shall be no night there." Such is the description given us of heaven. Most of this

description we are most probably to understand as figurative, intending by the most splendid things in nature, to set forth the exceeding glory of the residence of the saints. And as a further proof of its exceeding glory, we may observe that heaven is the place of the throne of God. Though he fills immensity with his presence; yet he is in a special sense in heaven. Heaven is, as it were, the palace of the King of the universe. "In my *Father's house* (saith Christ) are many mansions," John xiv. 2. Hence heaven may in a peculiar sense be called the house of God. It must therefore be an unspeakably glorious place. In this glorious place, the saints shall forever reside, in "a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. v. 1. And in mansions prepared by the Redeemer, John xiv. 2.

6. They shall there possess a rich and glorious *inheritance*. The possessions of this world are corruptible and transitory; but treasures are laid up for the saints in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Mat. vi. 20. An inheritance there awaits them, which is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." 1 Pet i. 4. They "are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 16, 17.

7. In heaven the saints shall be advanced to great honours. Are honours united with kingdoms, crowns and thrones? Such honours await the saints. They shall receive a kingdom. "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you *the kingdom*." Luk. xii. 32. "I appoint unto you a *kingdom*, as my Father hath appointed unto me." Luk. xxii. 29. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit *the kingdom* prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Mat. xxv. 34. The saints shall possess a kingdom, and they shall be kings, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us *kings* and priests unto God and his Father." Rev. i. 5, 6. And they shall be crowned; for they have the promise of a crown of righteousness—a crown of life—an incorruptible crown—and a crown of glory which fadeth not away. "Henceforth (saith Paul 2 Tim. iv. 8.) there is laid up for me a *crown of righteousness*, which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall

give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And again we hear him saying, 1 Cor. ix. 25. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an *incorruptible*." Be thou faithful unto death (saith Christ Rev. ii. 10.) and I will give thee *a crown of life*." "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear (saith Peter, 1 Pet. v. 4.) ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." A throne also awaits them. "If we suffer (saith Paul, 2 Tim. ii 12.) we shall also reign with him." "To him that overcometh (saith Christ, Rev. iii. 21.) will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." The meanest believer who would not be noticed by the great ones of the earth, is heir to honours, with which the greatest earthly honours that were ever possessed by man is not worthy to be compared. Lazarus, though left in this world to lie unnoticed, or neglected at the gate of the rich man, is in heaven exalted to honours very far superior to what the latter had ever enjoyed. The meanest and most despised believer that ever lived, shall in dignity be exalted above the greatest earthly personage, as far as the heavens are above the earth; and far more than the prince on the throne, is above the beggar in the streets. Truly as saith the apostle John of the saints, "the world knoweth us not." 1 John iii. 1. They are sons, heirs of God, and kings; and a kingdom, a crown, a throne, and an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, all await them.

8. In heaven the saints shall be engaged in the most dignified and delightful *employments*. What these will be, we as yet know but very little. The Scriptures speak of the praise and service of God. Probably a part of their employments will be the contemplation of the divine glories, and desiring and seeking after, and discovering, more and more of the divine character, and the mysteries of the divine proceedings. The knowledge of the saints in heaven will doubtless be greatly increased; for then they shall know, even as they also are known. And this knowledge will be a great source of happiness—and one part of their employments will probably be, looking into the character, works and ways of God, and thus increasing their knowledge. Probably also, like the angels, they may at times be sent on errands of the divine will, to other

worlds, and other rational beings. But whatever their employments may be, we may be assured, they will all be most glorious, and best calculated to afford them happiness.

9. Another ingredient in the happiness of heaven will be the blessed *society*, with which the saints shall there be associated. All the society will be holy; and all will be of one mind, conformed to the same will of God. They shall dwell with fellow saints and holy angels. In no individual of this numerous throng will there be a single selfish or discordant passion, for a moment to disturb the harmony that will there prevail. Every one will there love his neighbour as himself. Pure and perfect love and harmony will there universally prevail; and every one will conspire to promote the happiness of the whole. The happiness derived from friendship, even in this imperfect world is very great. This kind of happiness the saints will in heaven enjoy in perfection. And they shall there dwell and enjoy communion, not only with one another; but with their Saviour, and their God. They shall there see that Saviour whom unseen they loved, and who was here precious to their souls,—the chief among ten thousands, and altogether lovely. And they shall there dwell in the presence of the triune God. For they "shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. They shall see face to face and know even as they are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. This will be the chief and highest source of the happiness of the saints in heaven.

In the happiness of heaven there will be different *degrees*. The happiness of each will be complete; but the capacities of some to contain happiness will be greater than that of others; as there are larger and smaller vessels, and they may all be completely full, though one contains much more than another. This sentiment, that there will be different degrees of happiness in heaven, the Scriptures clearly support. In the parable of the pounds, Luk. xix. the servant who with his pound gained ten pounds, was made ruler over ten cities; and he who gained five pounds was set over five cities. And the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead," and again, 2

Cor. ix. 6. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

The happiness of the saints will be *uninterrupted*, without a moments cessation or diminution. And we have reason to believe that it will continually be *increasing;* that the powers and capacities of the saints will continually be gradually expanding, and that they will continually be advancing in the scale of perfection from one degree of holiness, glory and happiness to another. This we infer as probable from a consideration of the progressive nature of the soul.

And what crowns all this happiness is, it will be *eternal.* If the saints had the most distant prospect, that after millions of millions of ages, this happiness might come to an end, the prospect would greatly diminish their felicity. But it shall have no such alloy; it shall never come to an end; for it is "life eternal."

And is it possible brethren, that all this unspeakably glorious happiness is prepared for any of us.— Is it possible that any of us, unworthy, vile, and hell-deserving creatures, shall ever be made partakers of this "far more exceeding, and eternal weight of glory?" Yes, God has promised it to the righteous.— If therefore we are righteous in the sense of our text, this glory and happiness are prepared for us. The regenerate shall enter into the kingdom of God; the penitent shall obtain this mercy; the true believer in Christ shall receive this salvation: they, that do righteousness, are righteous, and shall enjoy this eternal life; and the pure in heart, and the holy shall see God. If this be our character, we shall enjoy this happiness. Let us therefore examine ourselves, and compare our character with that to which in the word of God, this blessedness is promised. If we possess the character, let us rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And let the prospect of heaven comfort the people of God under all their present trials. The trials which they now endure are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed. Yea these comparatively light afflictions, which are comparatively but for a moment shall work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Christians, what reason have you to adore the condescension of God, that

he ever thought of you with mercy; and still more that he should prepare such a glory for you! and what great obligations are you under to devote yourselves unreservedly to his service, and by lives of holiness to glorify him in the world? And have you such prospects before you, and ought you not to live worthy of them? Degrade not that dignity and inheritance to which you are heirs by a sordid attachment to the world or by suffering yourselves to fall into sin. Walk worthy of your high vocation. Live as children of the light, and as children of the King of kings and heirs of all things. Be encouraged to do and to suffer the whole will of God. A few days more and your warfare will be accomplished, and you shall enter upon all the unspeakable glory and happiness of heaven. And is there such an inheritance, laid up in heaven for the saints? How consummate then is the folly of those who neglect it? Who rather than part with the momentary pleasures of sin, let go these eternal joys? And who not only suffer the loss of heaven, but bring upon themselves unspeakable and eternal destruction? Let those who have heretofore neglected their future happiness, seriously consider what they are losing, and be persuaded by the joys of heaven without delay to give all diligence to secure an interest in the inheritance of the saints.—AMEN.

SERMON LVIII.

OBEDIENCE.

DEUTERONOMY V. 33. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you.*"

The system of religion is divided into two great parts, viz. What we are to believe, and what we are to do; or *faith* and *practice*. We have finished that part, which in this division properly belongs to faith. We come now to treat of what is included under the general head of *practice*,

or of what we are to do. Our duty as it regards practice is very comprehensively summed up in our text, "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you." Revealed religion is not merely a system of truths to be believed; but it is also a system of duties to be performed. And the belief of the one, and the practice of the other, are inseparably united together in true religion. And in vain do any hope to be saved by an orthodox faith, unless their practice also be good, and according to the revealed will of God.

The duty which God requires of man is in general terms summed up in the answer to the 39th question of our Catechism.

"*What is the duty which God requireth of man?*

The duty which God requireth of man, is obedience to his revealed will."

The special rule of obedience which God has revealed to man, we have contained in the answer to the next question.

"*What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?*

The rule which God at first revealed to man for his obedience was the moral law."

The answer to the next two questions inform us wherein this law is summarily comprehended.

"*Wherein is the moral law summarily comprehended?*

The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments."

"*What is the sum of the ten commandments?*

The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves."

Our text will lead us to take a general view of these answers, as introductory to a particular illustration of the ten commandments.

I. We observe that obedience to the will of God is our duty. This may be proved from the character of God, the relations which we sustain to him, and the declarations of his word.

II. His *character*. He is a being of infinite wisdom. He perfectly knows what is the tendency of every rule of conduct which may be prescribed for his creatures; and he perfectly knows what is right, and what is best for them.

He is a being of almighty power, who can enforce his laws, and whose will none can effectually resist. He is also a being of perfect justice, whose will cannot be wrong; but must always be perfectly right. And he is a being of infinite benevolence, whose will is not only right; but perfectly good, and calculated for the best happiness of his creatures. Such a being is certainly fitted to reign, and is worthy the obedience of all other beings. His will is perfect; and if it be our duty to shun wrong and do that which is right, it is our duty to render obedience to the will of God.

2. The *relations* which subsist between God and us, teach us that obedience to his will is our duty. He is our Creator; and he made us for himself. He has therefore an absolute propriety in us. We are entirely his property; and are therefore certainly bound to obey his will.—He is also our Preserver. We not only derived our being from him; but this being is continued by his supporting power. "In him we live and move and have our being." Acts xvii. 28. We could not continue to exist one moment independent of him.

From him also we derive every blessing temporal and spiritual. All we have and are therefore belong to him. And it must therefore be our indispensable duty to render obedience to his will.

3. That obedience to the divine will is our duty, is very frequently and explicitly taught in the *Scriptures*. Both the Old and New Testaments, abound with injunctions on this head. Our text is positive. "Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you." Numerous texts of the same import are found in the Scriptures. I shall point you to a few, selected from the New Testament which show that obedience is enjoined under the gospel dispensation, as well as it was under the legal. Christ taught "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Mat. vii. 21. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke vi. 46. "If ye love me keep my commandments." John xiv. 15. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John xv. 14. and, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have

right to the tree of life." Rev. xxii. 14. Hence it is evident that obedience to the will of God is our duty.

This obedience which we owe to the will of God, should be personal, sincere, perfect, and perpetual.

It should be *personal*; that is we are bound to render obedience ourselves. We cannot be released from our obligations by the obedience of others. The language of the Scriptures is "*thou* shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. *thou* shalt love thy neighbour." Mat. xxii. 37. 39. "*The man* that doth them shall live in them." It ought to be *sincere.* or with our hearts, as well as our bodies. External obedience, unless it be sincere or from the heart will not be acceptable. God requires the heart. The language of his word is, "My son give me thine heart." Prov. xxiii. 26. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Mat. xxii. 37.

This obedience ought also to be *perfect*, or to the full extent of all the powers of the whole man, both soul and body, without swerving in any instance, or coming short in the least degree. For God is worthy the highest obedience of which he has made us capable, according to the natural powers which he has given us. And he requires, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy strength, and with *all* thy mind." Luke x. 27. Again this obedience ought to be *perpetual.* It is our duty to render a personal, sincere, and perfect obedience to the will of God, not merely for a limited time, but unremittingly, and continually; for the foundations of our obligations to obedience continue the same, and therefore our duty will continue the same.

II. We observe that the will of God to be the rule of our conduct must be revealed. "The duty which God requireth of man is obedience to his *revealed will.*" And "ye shall walk in all the ways, which the Lord your God hath *commanded you.*" If his will were not revealed or made known, his creatures could not be under obligations to render obedience to it. For, "secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed, belong unto us." Deut. xxix. 29. The will of God which he has not made known, or with which we have not the means of becoming acquainted, we are not bound to obey.

But when God has revealed his will, and has given us the means of becoming acquainted with it, we are under obligations to obedience, whether we actually know his will or not. For it is our duty to know the will of God, when he has revealed it, and afforded the means of knowing it. And in these circumstances it is highly criminal to be ignorant of the divine will.

God *has* made known his will to men, to be the rule of their duty. He has in a degree made it known to all men. For he has in some measure written his law on the consciences of men, as we learn from Rom. ii. 14, 15. "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." The works of God also in some measure declare to all men his will and their duty. As we learn from Ps. xix. 1—4. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."—And from Rom. i. 20. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." Much of our duty is taught by the light of nature, or the works of God, and the dictates of conscience; and enough to leave those who have no other guide, without excuse for their disobedience. But this light has become greatly obscured by the fall; and though it is owing to the depravity of man that so little is learned from this source, God has in infinite mercy condescended to make a far more clear revelation of his will, to be the rule of man's duty. This clear revelation we have in the Holy Scriptures. The will of God thus made known is his law, by which they, who have the means of becoming acquainted with the Scriptures, are to be governed.

We proceed now.

III. To shew the nature, obligation, and use of the divine law.

I. *The nature.*

The law of God contained in the Scriptures, has been generally considered as threefold, viz. ceremonial, judicial, and moral. The *ceremonial* law includes those religious rites which God prescribed to the church of old, as shadows or types of good things to come. These laws were obligatory on the church, from the time that they were given, until Christ the substance came, and then they ceased to be any longer binding.

The *judicial* law includes those precepts which God enjoined upon the Israelites as a nation. Of these some were founded in the nature and fitness of things, and are therefore obligatory on all nations: and have been introduced into the code of all well regulated governments, down to the present time. Others arose out of the local circumstances of the Jewish nation, and were binding only upon them.

The *moral* law is that with which we are more intimately concerned. This branch of the divine laws, is sometimes subdivided into moral *natural*, and moral *positive*.

By the first kind of moral precepts. we understand those which are founded in the very nature and fitness of things, and which would have been binding on men, had God never expressly enjoined them. Thus it would have been our duty, to have loved God, and to have loved our neighbour, though God had never expressly commanded us so to do. This division of the moral law is the same with what is called the law of nature. It is the law of nature committed to writing.

By moral *positive* precepts we understand those which could not have been discovered by the light of nature; but which become duty solely because God has commanded them. Of this nature are the laws respecting baptism and the Lords Supper. The obligations to observe them arises from a positive command of God. It would be our duty to pray unto God, though he had never commanded it; but it would not be our duty, to observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, if God had not enjoined it. Of the same nature is a part of the fourth commandment. That part of it which requires a portion of our time to be particularly devoted to the worship of God is moral natural, and would have been binding without an express command. But that part which requires

that we should devote the seventh rather than the sixth, or any other portion of our time; and that part which directs the seventh day of the week, rather than any other to be observed, are moral positive, and for any thing we can discover, become duty because God has so pleased to command.

Those precepts which we call moral natural are perpetually and unchangeably binding; for being founded in the nature and fitness of things, while these continue, the laws founded on them must continue in force.—But positive precepts may be changed, though they continue in force until revoked or altered by the sovereign Lawgiver.

"The moral law is summarily comprehended in the ten commandments." "The sum of the ten commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength. and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves." The whole of the law is summed up in the single word, "*Love.*" As saith the Apostle, Rom. xiii. 10. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

The law requires us to love God supremely and perfectly, or to the utmost extent of all the powers of the whole man, soul and body. It requires us thus to love God himself, for what he is, in himself. The excellence of the divine character is the primary and the highest foundation of all true love to God.

The law also requires us to love ourselves; for it requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves which clearly implies that self love is a duty. This love of ourselves is to be subordinate to the love which we owe to God.—Our love is not to be divided between God and ourselves. But we are to love ourselves with a subordinate love; and that same love with which we love ourselves is to go beyond ourselves to God as its ultimate object. There are duties which we owe ourselves, such as the preservation of our own lives, character, health, and estate; endeavours to be comfortable in the world; to obtain heaven hereafter; and the like. In the performance of these duties we may have the glory of God in view, and our own happiness in subordination to his glory. And indeed we cannot love God, and obey him without performing these duties which we owe to ourselves.

The law further requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is also to be in subordination to the love which we owe to God. By loving our neighbour as ourselves, we are to understand the same. as that rule of equity laid down by our Saviour Mat. vii. 12. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The law of loving our neighbour as ourselves, requires us to respect our neighbour's rights. And in every situation in which we have any thing to do with our neighbour, to act towards him, just as in a change of circumstances, we would expect him to act towards us.

2. To consider the *extent* of our *obligation* to keep the divine law. The ceremonial law as we have observed was done away by the coming of Christ, and the judicial laws given to the Jews, were intended to be obligatory only on that nation, except those which were of a moral nature. The question then, here to be considered is, Is the moral law binding under the christian dispensation, and is it our duty to render a perfect obedience to it?

This question I would answer in the affirmative. We are as much in duty bound to render perfect obedience to the moral law as ever Adam was. For the foundations of duty continue the same, and therefore duty itself must continue equally binding. What is the sum of the moral law? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Our duty to God here stated is founded on his excellence, or his being what he is, which renders him worthy of the highest and most perfect love; and the obligation is increased by the relations which he sustains to us of Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor. And our duty to others here enjoined, is founded on others being what they are, and standing related to us as they do. While therefore God continues to be what he is, which he will eternally do, it will be our duty to love him perfectly; and while we have neighbours, there will be the same reason that ever existed, that we should love them as ourselves. The moral law must therefore be still binding; and we are under as great obligations as ever Adam was to render perfect obedience thereunto. That we have fallen and are depraved creatures, and indisposed to keep the law, is no reason why we should not keep it. God is as worthy of

the perfect love of his creatures as he ever was; and neighbours stand in the same relation to each other that they ever did. Yea I may say that we are perhaps under greater obligations to render perfect obedience to the divine law than Adam was. For in addition to all the reasons why he should be obedient, there is this reason to enforce our obedience which he had not in his state of innocency—the amazing love of God manifested in redemption.

The truth of this position that we are under obligations to render perfect obedience to the divine law, is further confirmed by what we find in the Scriptures on this subject. The reason given why the Saviour was called Jesus, was, "he shall save his people from their sins." Mat. i. 21. In his instructions he ever inculcated practical holiness, and he declared to his hearers, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Mat. v. 17. And he particularly enjoined upon his hearers, "All things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Mat. vii. 12. "And be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," Mat. v. 48. And in the Epistles we read. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Rom. iii. 31. "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God—2 Cor. vii. 1. "Now the God of peace—make you perfect in every good work to do his will." Heb. xiii. 20, 21. "As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy," 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. Further, suppose that Christ by his death, did away the obligation of men to render perfect obedience to the divine law, is to suppose that he died to purchase for men an exemption from that which is right, and makes him the minister of sin—a sentiment which the Scriptures reject with abhorrence. "Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid." Gal. ii. 17.

From all these considerations we conclude, that the moral law is still in full force, and as much obligatory upon mankind as it ever was; and that sin or a transgression of the law is as hateful to God as it ever was.

It is true that none of the fallen race of man can be saved by their obedience to the moral law; for it has

ceased to be a covenant of life or a covenant by which life can be obtained; but it still remains a rule of duty. And it is also true that none of mankind do perfectly fulfil the law; but this does not destroy the obligation to obedience. With respect to the unregenerate who are out of Christ, they are under the law as a covenant, and if they should die in this state must bear its heavy penalty for failing perfectly to fulfil it and for transgressing its precepts. And with respect to the regenerate who are united to Christ, though it is their duty to render perfect obedience to the will of God, and though they come short, yet God accepts their sincere obedience, and pardons their failings.—Not because he has released them from obligations to perfect obedience; but for the sake of the atonement and perfect righteousness of Christ, to whom they are united. So that although believers cannot be saved by the works of the law; yet the law is still binding upon them as a rule of life. And they are under obligations to render perfect obedience thereunto; and to love the Lord their God, with all their heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and their neighour as themselves; and they deserve the wrath of God for failing to do this. And they who have right apprehensions of the character of God, will feel that it is their duty, thus to love and serve him; and that they are blameable and deserve God's wrath and curse for coming short.

3, And here the question may be asked, since life cannot now be obtained by the law, and since fallen man is morally unable perfectly to fulfil it, of what *use* is it under the Gospel? I answer it is of great use. It teaches all men the holy nature and will of God, and what is the duty they owe to him. It teaches them the sinfulness of their nature, hearts, and lives. It is calculated to humble them, and to shew them their inability, and the insufficiency of any thing they can do to merit salvation, and the need they have of a Saviour. It is of great use to awaken the consciences of the unregenerate, and to convince them of their sin, guilt, and danger; "for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. iii. 20. It is of great use to drive them off, when awakened, from every false ground of hope, and especially from a self righteous foundation, and to drive them to Christ to take refuge in his perfect

righteousness, from the wrath with which the law threatens them; or if they continue in sin and rebellion to leave them inexcusable. It is also of great use to the real people of God. Its dreadful curse from which they are delivered by Christ to whom they are united by faith, teaches them, how much they are bound to love him; and thus is calculated to lead them to thankfulness, and to be careful to conform themselves to the law as a rule of life, which is well pleasing to Christ. The law further instructs them into the holy nature and will of God, and teaches them what they ought to be, and how far they come short; and thus is calculated to humble them. And it is a rule for them, by which to regulate their conduct, and according to which every true child of God, must and will endeavour to walk. He will love the law of God, and desire to be perfectly conformed thereunto, he will grieve that he comes short; and he will rest entirely satisfied with nothing short of perfect obedience.

Since then the moral law is still binding, and is of such great use in the system of religion, we shall proceed in future discourses to treat thereof, as it is summarily contained in the ten commandments. These commandments were delivered by God himself from Mount Sinai, and written by him on two tables of stone. The first table including the first four of these commandments, contains our duty to God; the second table, comprising the last six commandments contains our duty to man.

The moral law as contained in these commandments though expressed in few words is exceeding broad. These commandments are an epitome of the moral precepts revealed throughout the Scriptures. And perhaps we may say, there is no moral precept, enjoined in the Scriptures, but what is either expressly or implicitly contained in the ten commandments.

In improving this subject, let it be deeply impressed on our minds that we are under indispensable obligations to render obedience to the revealed will of God. Let us therefore carefully endeavour to become acquainted with his will.—Let us remember that the moral law is still binding upon us, and that we are under obligations perfectly to obey it. Let a conviction of this drive the sinner to Christ, under a sense of his transgressions, and his exposure to the curse of the law; and let it lead the chris-

tian to be careful to maintain good works, and to seek to be perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.—Amen.

SERMON LIX.

PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

EXODUS XX. 2.

"*I am the Lord thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*"

In this chapter we have the ten commandments, containing a summary of the moral law. These commandments were delivered to the nation of Israel from Mount Sinai, immediately by the voice of God himself. The circumstances attending their delivery were such as showed their great importance, and were peculiarly calculated to impress mankind with awe, and lead them to obedience. The people were apprised that the Lord was about to come down upon Mount Sinai; and were commanded to sanctify themselves for two days before, and to wash their clothes.—Bounds were set round about the mountain; and both man and beast were forbidden to touch it under pain of death. And when the Lord came down upon the mount, "there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled—and Mount Sinai, was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly." Ex. xix. 16, 18. With such solemn circumstances accompanying, and with such terrible majesty, were the ten commandments given, by the voice of God himself. The whole transaction was calculated to awe the Israelites into obedience; and not only the Israelites, but us also, and all who in after ages should be made acquainted with these

commandments, and the manner in which they were given.

Our text is the preface or introduction to the ten commandments, and contains reasons to enforce our obedience to them.

We shall in the ensuing discourse endeavour to illustrate the import of this *preface.*

This subject is contained in our Catechism in the answers to the 43d and 44th questions—

"*What is the preface to the ten commandments?*

"*The preface to the ten commandments is in these words, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

What doth the preface to the ten commandments teach us?

The preface to the ten commandments teacheth us, that because God is the Lord, and our God and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments."

Our text contains three reasons why we should keep the moral law, as summarily comprehended in the ten commandments; viz.

I. Because God is the Lord—"I am the Lord."

II. Because he is our God—"thy God."

III. Because he is our Redeemer–"Which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

I. The first reason why we should keep God's commandments is, he is *the Lord*—"I am the Lord"—or Jehovah. God here asserts his sovereignty, or his absolute right to reign, and give laws to his creatures, and therefore their duty to obey his laws, from the consideration of what he is. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, signifying essential existence. It expresses his being.—God here gives his essential being as a reason of his right of authority over his creatures, and of their obligations of obedience to his commandments. The perfections of God are the same with his being. His essential perfections are therefore here brought into view, as constituting a foundation of man's obligation to render obedience to his commandments.

God is self existent. He is Jehovah—the I AM—the self existent being, having his being in and of himself, and giving being to all things else. He is the first cause of all things; for nothing else is self existent; all things

else are derived from him, and dependent on him, and therefore are his. He gave them being according to his will, and he made them for himself; and therefore he has an indisputable right to govern his creatures according to his will, and all who are capable of knowing his will, are under indispensable obligations to render obedience.

Again, as Lord or Jehovah, he is infinitely wise; for as he is the first cause of all things, every perfection which we see in creatures, must in an infinite degree belong to him. Therefore his laws, which must be an expression of his will, as he is independent of every creature, and can be under no bias from others to influence his will, must also be, like himself, infinitely wise.

Infinite goodness is also included in the name Jehovah. This is an essential perfection of God—"God is love," 1 John iv. 8. "Abundant in goodness and truth," Ex. xxxiv. 6. This perfection will invariably lead him to frame such laws as will best conduce to the happiness of his creatures, and in promoting the general good, and in keeping of which individual happiness will be best secured.

Strict justice is also another essential attribute of God. "All his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he," Deut. xxxii. 4. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne," Ps. lxxxix. 14. Hence it follows that God can will nothing but what is right, and therefore that he will always govern according to strict right, and have respect in his laws to all the rights of all his creatures. Creatures therefore, who desire to do right, and to have that which is right done to them, are always safe in the hands of such a Law-giver.

Again, omnipresence and omniscience are perfections essential to the divine being. He is present to all his creatures; "for in him we live and move and have our being," Acts xvii. 28. And he perfectly knoweth all his creatures. "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked, and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do," Heb. iv. 13. "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts," 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. "The righteous God trieth the hearts and reins," Ps. vii. 9. He therefore cannot be deceived, and perfectly knows how to distribute justice to every one.

Again, as Jehovah he is all-sufficient. He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," Eph. iii. 20. He is abundantly able to supply all the necessities of all his creatures. He has an infinite fulness from which to relieve them amidst all their distresses, and to reward them for their obedience.

Further, as Jehovah he is omnipotent. He is the Almighty God. He has all power to enforce his all-wise, benevolent and righteous laws; to protect and reward the obedient, and punish the disobedient; and thus to secure the good of his creatures at large, and the individual happiness of his obedient subjects.

Such a being is God. He is self-existent having his being in and of himself, giving being to all other creatures, and supporting them in existence, and therefore having an absolute right to give them laws and require their obedience; and he also possesses such perfections as every way qualify him to govern, and to secure the general good, and the rights of individuals, and their happiness too if they be obedient. He has infinite wisdom to know how to frame the best laws; infinite benevolence to lead him to give the best laws; infinite justice to influence him to give laws, which will secure the rights of all his subjects; omnipresence and omniscience, to be always at hand, and always knowing, to all the wants, and all the motives of action, and all the deserts of all his creatures; all-sufficiency to support all their necessities, and reward their obedience; and almighty power to enforce his laws, fulfil his promises to the obedient, and execute his threatnings upon the disobedient. Such a being is certainly every way fitted to reign, and has an absolute right to govern. This argument therefore in the preface to the ten commandments runs thus; "I am the Lord," or Jehovah—the self-existent being, the supreme first cause of all things, an all wise, infinitely good and just, an every where present, omniscient, all-sufficient, and almighty being, therefore thou shalt obey my laws—"thou shalt have no other gods before me, &c."

This character of God makes his will a law, whether we can discover any thing in the reason and fitness of things to oblige us to obedience or not. In many of the laws which he has given us, we can discover a suitableness or fitness in them, obligating us to obedience, and

this is the case with the chief of the precepts of the ten commandments, but where this is not the case, considering the character of God, a "thus saith the Lord," is a sufficient reason why we should render obedience. He has an absolute right to command what he pleases; for he can command nothing but what is right; and when his will is made known, we are under indispensable obligations to render implicit obedience. So that positive precepts, until revoked by the Law-giver are equally binding with natural precepts, except where they clash with each other, and then we are to obey natural precepts rather than positive.

We proceed to the

II. Reason mentioned in our text to enforce obedience to the ten commandments, viz. that the Lord is *our God*, "I am the Lord, *thy God*." This reason is drawn from the covenant of grace; and is an additional reason to the one which we have just considered—"I am the Lord," why men, to whom God is revealed in this character, should obey his commandments. They ought to obey his commandments, not only because he is the Lord, or is what he is; but also because he offers himself in the covenant of grace, to be the reconciled God of all who will truly believe in his Son; and because he really sustains this relation to all his people. That the covenant of grace is here intended and brought into view, we learn from the general meaning of the phrase, "thy God" throughout the Scriptures; for this phrase uniformly refers to the covenant of grace. When man fell and brake the covenant of works, God ceased to be his God. He became his enemy and angry with him every day; and is still angry with him, unreconciled to him, and allows him no part nor lot in his favour, when he beholds him as under the first covenant.

But in the covenant of grace through Christ, God offers himself as a reconciled God and portion, and becomes such to all who truly believe in his Son. It was in reference to this covenant that God addressed the Israelites, at Sinai, who were in visible covenant with him, and called himself their God. And a particular reference was evidently here made to the covenant made with their ancestor Abraham, which clearly was the covenant of grace. In this covenant God had promised to be the God of Abra-

ham and of his seed, and he here reminded the Israelites of this promise.

And here I would remark that the title which God here gives himself, "thy God," teaches us that the moral law which follows, was given, not as a covenant of works, but as pertaining to the covenant of grace, or with reference to it. For, that the Lord was their God, which he could be to sinners only in the covenant of grace, was given as a reason, why they should keep the moral law. It was given to show the holiness of God, and the extent, evil, and desert of sin; to convince the sinner of his utter inability to save himself, to show him his need of a Saviour, and to be a schoolmaster to drive him to Christ; and at the same time to be to the true believer, really in the covenant of grace, a rule of duty according to which he should regulate his conduct.

The covenant of grace affords to all to whom it is revealed a strong reason to enforce their obedience to the holy law of God. In this covenant God has manifested his infinite condescension and love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" John iii. 16. The Son engaged to do the will of the Father. He became a surety for all who should believe in him before the days of his flesh; and it was in virtue of his suretiship, which could not fail, that God became the covenant God of the Old Testament saints, before atonement was actually made for sin. In the fulness of time, the Son of God assumed human nature, took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He bare the curse of the divine law due to sin, and thus satisfied divine justice, and procured reconciliation with God for all, who will believe in his name. In and through Christ, God offers himself to be the sinner's God, which includes every blessing of the covenant of grace—grace here and glory hereafter. Most assuredly this consideration, ought to be a powerful motive to lead us to obedience to the will of God.

We are under indispensable obligations to render obedience to the will of God from the consideration of his essential character. And his character as a covenant God, or a God in Christ reconciling sinners to himself, undoubtedly strengthens these obligations. And if the covenant

of grace afforded such a strong argument, to enforce obedience to the laws of God upon the Israelites ; it undoubtedly affords a much stronger argument to enforce obedience upon us, who live under the new dispensation of this covenant. For the nature of this covenant is now much more clearly revealed than it was formerly. The love of Christ, in his humiliation, obedience, sufferings, and death has been manifested to the world. And the grace of God and the blessings of the covenant of grace are now much more clearly made known than they were under the Old Testament dispensation. We therefore, who live under the light of the Gospel, are under increased obligations to render obedience to the law of God. And Christ, by his coming, instead of relaxing these obligations, as some pretend, has really increased them; And instead of having rendered sin a less evil, and less odious in the sight of God, and thus becoming the minister of sin, he has made it the more exceedingly sinful. And those who under gospel light, continue to live in sin or disobedience to God's law, will be punished more severely, than if they had perished without hearing of the covenant of grace, or if they had enjoyed a revelation of it in a more obscure degree. The

III. Reason mentioned in our text to enforce obedience to the moral law, is contained in these words, " which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This reason taken literally was applicable only to the Israelites but nevertheless it instructs us that all the blessings which God bestows upon us, bring us under obligations to render obedience to him. Surely therefore we, in this favoured land where we enjoy so many blessings are under peculiar obligations, to render obedience to the commandments of God ; and must be peculiarly guilty, and deserving of punishment if we transgress.

But this argument, " which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," we have reason to believe was to be understood figuratively and spiritually as well as literally ; and in this sense it applies to all who stand related to God in the covenant of grace.— That dispensation, under which the Israelites were, abounded with types ; and almost all God's dealings towards them were intended to instruct them in spiritual

things. The providential dispensation brought into view in this argument was evidently typical. The bondage of the Israelites in Egypt, aptly represented the sad state of man, while under the bondage of sin and Satan; and the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage was typical of a spiritual deliverance from the thraldom of sin by Jesus Christ. And to this typical or spiritual, as well as the literal meaning, we are to suppose the Lord had reference in this reason. This explanation is confirmed by the consideration that the moral law was intended to be binding in all ages of the church, and therefore this reason to enforce its observance, ought to be so explained as to be applicable to other nations besides the Jews. Considered in this light, we are urged to obedience to the divine law, because God is our Redeemer. This reason lays under obligation to obedience to the divine law, all who hear of the way of deliverance from the bondage of sin, and to whom deliverance is offered. But especially does this argument apply to all the real people of God, who are actually delivered from the dominion of sin, and are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Let all consider the desert of sin, and the dreadful punishment to which it exposes them. From this punishment God offers salvation. How good and gracious must God be, who is thus willing to save guilty sinners, and who thus offers them salvation! He therefore certainly deserves that his will should be obeyed by us. Let christians especially, reflect on the awful danger from which they have been actually delivered; the amazing price which was paid to open a way for their redemption; and the greatness of that salvation of which they are made heirs, and they must be convinced that their obligations to render obedience to the divine will are peculiarly great.

From this subject we infer that we are under as great, and greater obligations now, to render obedience to the moral law than the Israelites were of old. Let us therefore feel our obligations, study to know and understand the law of God, and carefully endeavour in sincerity of heart to be obedient; let us mourn and repent when we come short or transgress; and let a sense of our failings and transgressions teach us the necessity of relying on grace for

salvation, endear Christ to us, and lead us continually to put our trust for pardon and acceptance in his righteousness. We infer again from our subject that obedience to God's commands is our reasonable service. If God be what he is, the self-existent, and supreme first cause of all things, an all-wise, infinitely good and just, omnipresent, omniscient, all-sufficient, and almighty being, he must unquestionably have an absolute right to reign, and his laws must all be just and good; and obedience to his will must be our reasonable service. And if he has so loved our world as to give his Son to suffer and die to open a way of salvation for our wretched race; if he has been so infinitely merciful as in and through him to make a covenant of grace, in which he offers to become our God, and to deliver us from the punishment and the bondage of sin, and to make us heirs of a glorious, blessed, and eternal inheritance; and doth actually thus deliver and make heirs many of our race,—he certainly must be worthy our obedience. All that he has spoken to us, we ought to do. And sin which is a transgression of the law must be an exceedingly great evil; and the sinner must justly deserve God's wrath and curse. Let us all be impressed with a sense of the reasonableness of obedience to the commandments of God, and the unreasonableness of sin; let sinners out of Christ, realize their guilt and danger; and flee without delay, to him for safety; and let all who name the name of Christ be careful to depart from all iniquity, and to keep the commandments of God.—AMEN.

SERMON LX.

DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 3.

"*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*"

The moral law, summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, is unchangeable and perpetually binding. It is therefore binding on us. And although we cannot now obtain life by the law; still we are under obligations to render obedience to it. And every christian, while he builds his hope on the Lord Jesus Christ and trusts entirely to his merits for pardon and acceptance with God, will at the same time love, and endeavour to keep the commandments of God, and will grieve and repent when he comes short or transgresses.—This is essential to the character of the true christian.—It is therefore highly important that we understand God's law. Our text is the first of the ten commandments. This commandment, though expressed in a few words, is exceeding broad; and taken in its utmost import, embraces the whole sum of religion. It is expressed negatively—"Thou shalt have *no* other gods before me. This not only forbids the sin which is expressly mentioned; but it implies the contrary duty. And this is a rule which applies to all the commandments; where a sin is forbidden the contrary duty is commanded, and where a duty is commanded the contrary sin is forbidden.

The duties required in this commandment are stated in our Catechism in the answer to the 46th question.

"*What is required in the first commandment.*

The first commandment requireth us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate the

duties required in the first commandment as stated in this answer.

These duties are three.

I. To know God.

II. To acknowledge him.

III. To worship and glorify him accordingly.

I. This commandment requires us to *know* God; first that he is, and then what he is. This knowledge lies at the foundation of all true religion. Without knowing and believing that there is a God, there can be no kind of religion. An Atheist, if there be such a being, can have no religion; for he denies the very first principle, on which all religion, whether true or false, is founded. That there is a God, all nature, constantly and loudly, proclaims; and to be convinced of this truth, we need only open our eyes upon the things we may see around us, and listen to the voice of reason. And it is our duty to know this truth that there is a God, not merely because we were educated in the belief of it, or because others believe it; but from an attention to the evidence by which it is supported.

And it is our duty not only to know that God is, but also what he is. This knowledge also is essential to true religion; for all true religion takes its rise from the character of God; and ignorance and error on this point, are the great causes of the false religion, and the irreligion which so much prevail in our world. It is therefore highly important to us and our indispensable duty to know what God is. Further God has revealed himself to be known by us, and therefore it must be our duty to know him. And besides he has frequently in his word taught the duty; as in the following texts among a great many others. "Acquaint now thyself with him." Job xxii. 21. "Know thou the God of thy father." 1. Chron. xxviii. 9. "Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment and righteousness in the earth." Jer. ix. 24. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God." John xvii. 3. All these and many other texts teach us that it is our duty to have a right knowledge of God.—And there are some passages, in which the want of this knowledge is reprehended as highly disgraceful and criminal. Such are the following. "My people are foolish,

they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding." Jer. iv. 22. "The Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." Hos. iv. 2. "They (that is the wicked) say unto God, depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Job xxi. 14. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hos. 4. 6. "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Rom. i. 28. "Some have not the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."—1. Cor. xv. 34. Hence we conclude that it is our indispensable duty to know the character of God, as far as he has revealed himself, and we have ability and opportunity to know it; and that those who are destitute of a knowledge of God are highly criminal. It is true God is incomprehensible, and in comparison of what he really is, it is but little that we can know of him; but it becomes us to know what we can.

There are two ways in which God makes himself known unto men; viz. by his works, and by his word. And we are in duty bound by the first commandment to have such a knowledge of God as may be obtained from the means of information which we enjoy. From the works of God may be learned his power, wisdom and goodness, and hence may be deduced the duties of fear, trust, gratitude, and love. In his word we have a far more clear and extensive exhibition of the divine character; and it is our duty, who have his word, to know him, not only as he has revealed himself in his works, but also in his word. A just knowledge of God is highly important. For our duties to him are founded on his character; we are in his hands, on him we are constantly dependent, to him we are accountable, and he will fix our eternal state; and he has offered himself to be known, and has made it our duty to know him.

It becomes us therefore to know that he is the one only living and true God; that he is a spirit, self-existent, the supreme first cause and last end of all things, all-sufficient, eternal, unchangeable, incomprehensible, every where present, omniscient, all-wise, almighty, infinitely holy, just, good, true, merciful, and gracious; that he subsists in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and

that he is a covenant God in Christ, in and through whom he is reconciling sinners to himself. In short, it becomes us to know whatever God has been pleased to reveal of himself—his nature, perfections, works, and ways. And however some may despise knowledge, and judge it to be of little importance what a man knows on the subject of religion; yet, knowledge is certainly of great importance; and ignorance, especially in our circumstances, where we have so abundantly the means of knowledge, is a great sin. And it is lamentable, that there are so many among us, so ignorant as they are, of the character of God, and the great truths of religion, which grow out of this character; and that they are bringing up their children in the same ignorance. This ignorance is a fruitful source of carelessness and sin. And even among those whose hearts we hope have been changed by the grace of God, we find some who have but little knowledge of God, in comparison of what they might have. And this is one reason of the frequent darkness of many, and the uncomfortable seasons through which they pass, and the slow progress they make in the divine life.

II. It is our duty not only to know; but also to *acknowledge* God, even the God of the Scriptures, to be the only true God, and our God. We should acknowledge him with our hearts, by placing them upon him, and giving them to him. We should acknowledge him with our lips by confessing him before men, and professing our attachment to him. And we should acknowledge him in our lives, by the performance of those duties which he requires of us. But the consideration of these duties, will come under the third branch of our subject. We shall therefore here confine ourselves to a public profession of attachment to God as our God.

This profession if it be good must be made through Jesus Christ as a Saviour; for it is through Christ alone that God will condescend to be our God. They therefore who rightly acknowledge God to be their God, must at the same time acknowledge Christ to be their Saviour, and place all their hopes of acceptance with God on the mediation of Christ.

The acknowledgment of God to be our God, or a public profession of religion, is the duty of all, who have come to years capable of knowing God. That it is the

duty of all to love and serve God, and make him their portion, is clearly evident from his character. He is supremely excellent. He is the first cause and last end of all things. He is possessed of every possible perfection. He is all-sufficient, and the only portion that can satisfy the desires of an immortal mind, and make his rational creatures truly happy. It must therefore be our duty and our happiness to take him for our God. Further, he has laid us under unspeakable obligations to take him for our God, by his creating and preserving goodness, by the bounties of his providence, and by redeeming love.

And if God be what he is, and be related to us as he is; and if it be our duty, therefore to take him for our God, to love and serve him, and make him our portion, it is certainly our duty to acknowledge before the world that he is our God, or in other words to make a public profession of religion. The duty of acknowledging, or publicly avouching the Lord to be our God is also clearly evident from Scripture. It was agreeably to the command of God that the Jews publicly avouched the Lord to be their God. And in the New Testament our Saviour taught, "whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Mat. x. 32. 33. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels—Mark. viii. 38. And in the Epistle to the Romans we read, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved," Rom. x. 9. And again, "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. These texts and many others prove the duty of making a public profession of religion. This is the indispensable duty of all, to take the true God for their God, and own him as such before the world. And therefore it is the duty of all who are capable of acting for themselves, to come to that ordinance, which God in his word has appointed to

be the badge of a visible profession–viz. the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Many are ready to suppose that it is not their duty, because they are not prepared. But want of preparation forms no just excuse. We are criminal for being unprepared. What is it to be prepared publicly to acknowledge the Lord to be our God, but to give him our hearts, and with our hearts take him for our God? This we are under indispensable obligations to do, and cannot for a moment neglect it without criminality. The want of love to God will therefore by no means take away our obligations to make a visible profession of religion It is true we ought not to profess religion with a heart unreconciled to God; but we ought not to have such aheart, or cherish such a temper. It is our indispensable duty immediately to love God, and to have such a temper as would fit us with sincerity and truth publicly to profess that the Lord is our God. And every opportunity we have to make a public profession of religion, and neglect to do it, and to do it too with the sincerity and temper of a real christian, we neglect our duty, break the first commandment, and sin against God.

III. We proceed to the third branch of duty implied in the first commandment, viz. "to *worship* and *glorify* him accordingly." Knowing the character of the true God, and acknowledging him to be our God, by making a sincere profession of religion, it becomes us to worship and glorify him, according to this knowledge and this profession. This branch of duty implied in the first commandment is very extensive, and embraces the whole of practical religion.

Knowing and acknowledging him to be the only true God, we ought to pay a religious worship to him alone. Since he is a spirit we ought to render him a spiritual worship and obedience; as our Saviour reasoned, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24. Being infinitely worthy of our attention, we ought to give him the chief place in our thoughts. As he is the most excellent being in the universe, and therefore the most worthy of our supreme esteem and love, we ought to give him our hearts, place our affections supremely upon him, and esteem and love him above all other things. As he is all-sufficient, a sat-

isfying portion, and the only portion which can fully satisfy the soul, we ought to choose him as our portion, and in sincerity adopt the language of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. God is my portion forever." Ps. LXXIII. 25, 26. We ought to desire and to prize his favour above every thing else; for "in his favour is life," Ps. XXX. 5. And his "loving kindness is better than life," Ps. LXIII. 3. As he is almighty in power, we ought to fear him above all other beings, and be afraid of sin which provokes his wrath; and rather suffer any thing from men than sin against God. As he searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, we ought to have a holy frame of mind, and guard against sinful thoughts and desires as well as actions. As he is every where present, we ought to act always as under his all-seeing eye, and in such a way as we are conscious he will approve. As he is a God of truth, we ought to believe all that he has spoken; and when we have evidence that any thing is his word, give an implicit credit to it. "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of such as diligently seek him," Heb. xi. 6. And here I would remark that the great gospel duty of faith in Jesus Christ is required in the first commandment, inasmuch as, that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of sinners belongs to the truth of God which the first commandment requires us to believe. Again, as God is a being of infinite wisdom, and therefore knows what is best for us, as he loves his people with a tender love, and as he is faithful to his word, and will perform what he has promised, it is our duty to put our trust in him, and place a firm reliance on his promises. As he is a holy God, it becomes us to hate sin, to repent of our sins, to turn from them with unfeigned sorrow, and to endeavour to be holy in heart and life as God is holy. As we are dependent on him for every blessing, and as he is a prayer hearing God, it becomes us to make our requests unto him, and ask him for such things as we need. As we derive every good gift from him, and as he dealeth bountifully with us, it becometh us to feel gratitude for his goodness, and render unto him thanksgiving and praise. When we reflect on his greatness and holiness, we ought to be filled with a sense of our comparative littleness,

vileness and unworthiness; and to feel and walk humbly before him. And when we consider his sovereignty and right of dominion over us, we ought to devote ourselves to his service, study his law, and render obedience thereunto. The disposition, thoughts, and desires, of our souls, the words that proceed from our lips, and all the actions of our lives ought to be in conformity to his law. We ought in heart word and deed to do those things which he requires, and carefully avoid whatever is displeasing to him.

From comparing our character and lives, with the illustration which has now been given of the duties required in the first commandment, we must all be convinced, that we have come short of our duty, and times without number have transgressed this commandment. How little do we know of the character of God, in comparison of what we might have known, from the privileges and opportunities with which we have been favoured? Those of us who have made the greatest improvement in divine knowledge, probably have reason to be ashamed, and are to blame. What then must be the criminality in this respect, of many, who scarcely know any of the first principles of the oracles of God? Is it our duty to acknowledge God to be our God, by giving our hearts to him and publicly professing our attachment to him? Then they are living in the neglect of their duty who have never done this. And we have many among us who have never yet, professedly avouched the Lord to be their God; and we have reason to fear more who have never really given their hearts to him, and taken him for their God. Such are condemned by this commandment. And is it our duty to worship and glorify him accordingly? Then we have all come short of our duty. Even those of the people of God, who are living most to his glory, do not worship and glorify him as they ought to do, or according to their knowledge of his character or their engagements to him. What then must we say of those who have never yet in any degree sincerely worshipped and glorified him? This commandment must condemn them.

My brethren, in view of our duty as taught in the first commandment, we must all acknowledge that we are sinners, and have reason to put up the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Let the law,

while by it we obtain the knowledge of sin, be a schoolmaster to drive us to Christ. While in the glass of the law, we behold our failures and transgressions, let this teach us our need of a Saviour; and lead us all to put our trust in his merits, that we may find pardon and acceptance in the sight of God.

But while we trust entirely to his righteousness for pardon and acceptance before God, let us remember that obedience to the divine law is our duty, and essentially necessary to the christian character. Let us therefore be exhorted to do our duty, as taught in this commandment.—Let us improve the privileges and opportunities we enjoy to become acquainted with the character of God. Let us acknowledge him to be our God, by first giving our hearts to him, and then openly professing our devotedness to his service—and let us worship and glorify him according to his character, and our profession of owning him as our God. Let us supremely esteem and love him. Let us take him as our portion. Let us fear, believe, and trust him. Let us pray unto him, be thankful for his mercies, and walk humbly before him. And let us devote ourselves to his service, and live in obedience to all his commandments. May he by his grace enable us thus to keep this commandments.—AMEN.

SERMON LXI.

ATHEISM.

EPHESIANS ii. 12. LAST CLAUSE.

"*And without God in the world.*"

In this chapter the apostle contrasts the character and state of the Ephesian christians, as they then were, with what they had once been. They were then, when he wrote this epistle to them, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, brought nigh unto God, and reconciled to him by the blood of Christ, fellow citizens with the saints

and of the household of God and were builded upon the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. But once they were dead in trespasses and sins; walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; had their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were children of wrath, Gentiles in the flesh, called uncircumcision, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Such were the character and state of these Ephesians before conversion. One trait of this character, we have contained in our text, "And without God in the world."

By this is meant, that they were destitute of a knowledge of the true God; for they were idolaters; and although they believed in the existence of a God or gods, they did not believe in the one only living and true God; and also, that they lived without him, or denied him by their wicked works.

Being without God in the world is a sin against the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"–Ex. xx. 3.

The sins forbidden by this commandment are stated in our Catechism in the answer to the 47th question—

What is forbidden in the first commandment.

The first commandment forbiddeth the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying the true God, as God and our God, and the giving that worship and glory to any other which is due to him alone."

According to this answer, the sins against the first commandment may be comprized under the general heads of atheism and idolatry.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of *atheism.* Atheism may be subdivided into *speculative* and *practical.* By speculative atheism is meant, denying the being of God; and by practical atheism, living as though there were no God.

I. *Speculative atheism.*—This may again be subdivided, into a professed denial of the being of a God of any kind, and a denial of the being of the true God, or that he is such a being as he is.

There are few, if any of the former kind of speculative atheists, who professedly deny the being of a God of any kind, and believe what they profess. On this kind of atheism we shall not here dwell, as its absurdity and wickedness have been already shown in the discourse on the being of a God. But of the latter kind of speculative atheists, or of those who while they profess to believe in the being of a God, nevertheless professedly deny the being of the true God, we have reason to believe there are many in our world, and this too under the light of revelation.

In this sense idolatry is atheism. For idolaters, though they believe in the existence of a God, or gods, nevertheless deny the true God; for their gods are no gods; and therefore they are chargeable with atheism as well as idolatry.

In this sense also, are those chargeable with atheism, who have low and improper thoughts of God, and look upon him to be such an one as themselves; for the god in whom they profess to believe, is merely a creature of their own imaginations, and they do not believe in the true God.—Such were those spoken of Ps. L. 21. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

Again, they who deny the providence of God, are chargeable with atheism. Activity is essential to God. Therefore to suppose him to be an indolent, and inactive being, who neither cares for, nor regards the affairs of creation, is to rob God of an essential perfection and by consequence of his being. For take away what is essential to the nature of God, and he ceases to be God. Besides he has, both in his works, and his word, taught his providence, or that he upholds and governs his works. They therefore who deny his povidence, deny him to be such a being as he has revealed himself to be, and therefore deny the true God. Hence the Epicureans who among the ancient Heathen, denied the providence of God, were chargeable with atheism; and this charge was fixed upon them by their fellow Pagans. Of this kind of atheism were those also guilty, spoken of, Ps. x. 11. "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it." And those also spoken of Ezek. viii. 12. "They say, the Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth."

They also who deny the doctrine of the Trinity are chargeable with atheism. For God has clearly revealed in his word that there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, subsisting in the divine essence. They therefore who deny that there are three distinct persons in the Godhead; or who deny the divinity of the Son and the Holy Ghost, deny the true God.—For the true God is, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three distinct and co-equal persons in one essence. Such persons make God to be something different from what he really is, and deny the true God; and are therefore chargeable with atheism. Again, they who deny any of the divine perfections, are chargeable with atheism, for they rob God of what is essential to his being. There have been some who professedly denied the omniscience of God; and some such persons may perhaps still be found. Thus we read, Ps. LXXIII. 11, of some who said—"How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" and Ps. XCIV. 7. "The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it." Such are guilty of atheism. There are also some who professedly deny his almighty power. Thus did the Israelites, when in the wilderness. Ps. LXXVIII. 19. 20. "They spake against God; they said can God furnish a table in the wilderness? can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?" Such are guilty of atheism. There are some again who professedly, or by implication deny the divine holiness and justice. Such are they who deny the atonement of Christ, and the necessity of an interest in his righteousness for salvation; who suppose that God will not punish sin; and who presume upon his mercy without holiness of heart and life. The language of such sentiments is that God is not infinitely holy and just. Such persons also are chargeable with atheism.

The foregoing atheistical sentiments arise from different causes. They may however all be traced to depravity of heart as their primary cause. Men do not like to retain the true knowledge of the true God in their minds; therefore they form to themselves an idea of a God more congenial to their wishes, than is the true character of the true God. Pride is one great cause of many wrong sentiments respecting the character of the true God. Another fruitful cause is ignorance. And here I would remark that

ignorance, while it often leads to atheistical sentiments, is itself a breach of the first commandment and a great sin.

The sentiment which has been frequently advanced and cherished, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, is dangerous and wicked. Ignorance, so far from being favorable to religion, has been a fruitful source of error, superstition, and wickedness. To know God is a duty required in the first commandment, and the want of this knowledge is a sin against this commandment; and ignorance of the truths of religion, especially in us who have so many means of information, is a great sin.

II. To consider practical *atheism.* There are very few professed atheists, who openly deny the being of a God. There are many however, who hold some of the sentiments of which we have been speaking, and which are a denial of the being of the true God. But even of this kind of atheists, we have reason to believe there are, in a christian land, but few, compared with the kind of which we are about to speak. Practical atheists are numerous in our world. By a practical atheist we mean one, who while he professes to believe that there is a God; and that he is such a God as he has revealed himself to be, and really is, nevertheless does not worship and glorify this true God as God, and as his God; but lives as though there were no God, or by his conduct contradicts what he professes to believe.

To give a particular description of all the conduct in which practical atheism discovers itself, would be to bring into view every sin, which would require a volume instead of a single sermon; we can therefore only make a few general remarks on this subject.

If there be a God, and he be what he is, he ought to be frequently in our thoughts. Forgetfulness of God is therefore practical atheism. For what is this but practically saying God is not that glorious and worthy being which he is?

If there be a God, and he be what he is, he ought to be known; for we are most intimately concerned to know him, and he is an object infinitely worthy to be known.—Ignorance of God is therefore practical atheism. For what, is this, but practically saying that God is not so worthy as he is, and that it does not concern us what he is?

If there be a God and he be what he is, it is certainly our duty to fear him; and the want of this fear is practical atheism, as it is a practical denial of his power to punish disobedience. It is also our duty, in view of the divine character to act with sincerity, and to act always as in the presence of God. And to be insincere in our professions, and to do in secret what we would not do openly, are practical atheism, as they are a practical denial, that God searches the heart, and is omniscient and omnipresent. Hypocrisy is therefore practical atheism.

If there be a God, and he be what he is, it is certainly our duty to love him supremely, and be thankful for his mercies; for he is certainly from the excellence of his nature, and the instances of his goodness, worthy our supreme love and our highest gratitude. And to feel no love, but on the contrary to exercise enmity towards him; and to exercise no gratitude, but on the contrary to be unthankful, certainly are instances of practical atheism; for such conduct is a practical denial of the excellence and the goodness of God.

If there be a God and he be what he is, it is our duty to trust him. Despairing of his mercy, fearing to commit our ways unto him, and murmuring and repining at his providential dispensations, are therefore practical atheism. For these are a practical denial of his wisdom, power, truth, mercy, and faithfulness.

Again, if there be a God, and he be what he is, it is certainly our duty to choose him as our portion, and to take him as our God, and worship him. If therefore we neglect these things, we are guilty of practical atheism.—For we hereby practically declare that God is not a satisfying good and portion, and we practically deny his right to us, and his worthiness of our worship; which is to make him something different from what he is, and is a practical denial of the being of the true God. Hence they who neglect the duty of prayer, and any other of the ordinances of divine worship are practical atheists.

Once more, if there be a God, and he be what he is, he ought to be obeyed. Every omission of duty, and every positive transgression of any of the divine commandments—in short every sin, whether in heart, word, or deed, and whether of omission or commission, is practical atheism; as every sin is a practical denial of the authority

of God, or his right to reign over us and give us laws; of his righteousness in laying such commands upon us; of his holiness or hatred of sin; of his truth in his threatnings against sin; and of his power to punish sin From what has been said we may see,

1. The inconsistency of many of mankind. They profess to believe that there is a God, and such a God as he has revealed himself to be, and yet act as though there were no God. They profess to believe that there is a God in whose hands they are and who, is infinitely excellent and kind, and yet they forget him, make no exertions to become acquainted with his character, live in ignorance of him, are unthankful, and neglect and refuse to love him. They profess to believe in his power, and yet do not fear him; and in his omnipresence, and omniscience and yet act as though he did not see them. They profess to believe in his right to their worship and yet do not worship him. They profess to believe in his infinite wisdom, power, and faithfulness, and yet do not trust in him. They acknowledge his providence, and yet do not regard the operations of his hand. And they profess to believe in his right of authority over his creatures, his holiness, justice, truth, and power, and the dreadfulness of his wrath, and yet live in rebellion. Surely there is great inconsistency in this! and that nature which is capable of acting thus must be greatly depraved. Such is our nature. Let us be humbled in view of this truth. Let us be ashamed of the inconsistency of our conduct, and endeavour in future to act more consistently, and according to what we profess to believe concerning the true God. Let us not endeavour as too many do to bring our sentiments, concerning the true God, and his religion, to correspond with our practice. This is one grand cause of infidelity. Men desire to be consistent. Hence, many, feeling no disposition to alter their practice, gradually change their sentiments to suit their practice. But let us take the word of God as our guide, and from it form our sentiments of the divine character. And if our practice does not correspond with what the character of God teaches us it ought to be, let us not alter our sentiments to suit our practice; but let us change our practice that it may correspond with correct sentiments.

2. We learn from our subject, something of the evil na-

ture and exceeding sinfulness of sin. Every sin, as we have seen, is practical atheism, as it is a practical denial of some of the perfections, and consequently of the being of the true God. Sin therefore which strikes at the very being of the infinitely perfect and glorious God, must be a great evil; and must be infinitely hateful in his sight, and deserving of all that punishment, which he has threatened against it. Let us therefore be impressed with a sense of the evil nature of sin. Let us seek pardon and deliverance from its dreadful consequences, in the way which God has been pleased to open, and which he has revealed in the Gospel, viz, through faith in the atoning blood of the Redeemer. Let us exercise unfeigned and deep repentance for our sins; and let us fear sin and watch and war against it.

3. We may learn from our subject, that dreadful misery must await those, who neglect and reject the salvation offered in the Gospel, and die with their sins unpardoned. For if sin be as we have seen, a practical denial of the true God, if in its tendency it would rob him of his glorious perfections and cast him down from the throne of the universe, and even destroy his being, a dreadful punishment must await those who shall finally perish, when God comes to pour out his wrath upon them for their sins against him. In the language of the Psalmist, Ps. L. 22. be exhorted, "consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." There is opened, a way of pardon and reconciliation with God.—He has given his son to make atonement for sin, and work out such a righteousness as he will accept. He has finished the work which the Father gave him to do. Salvation through him is now offered to us. It is now an accepted time and day of salvation. Let sinners therefore without delay accept of proffered mercy, by receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as he is offered in the Gospel, and putting their trust in him for salvation.

4. Finally, let christians from this subject be filled with a greater abhorence of sin. You profess not only to believe that there is a God, and that he is such a being as he is; but also to take him as your God, and to fear, love, reverence, worship, and obey him. Sin in you is therefore peculiarly inconsistent; and we may add peculiarly sinful. Always remember, that sin is a practical denial of

the perfections and being of God—it is practical atheism and strikes at the very existence of the Supreme Being. Let this thought be present when tempted to sin, and prevent its commission.—AMEN.

SERMON LXII.

IDOLATRY.

I CORINTHIANS X. 14.

"*Wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.*"

It was made a question among the Corinthian christians, whether it was lawful for them to sit down at the table of their Heathen neighbours, at their feasts, and partake with them of meat, which they were informed had been previously offered in sacrifice to idols. This question the Apostle decided in the negative; because the practice offended weak brethren, and was calculated to lead them astray; because it was a dangerous temptation to idolatry; and because it was itself a species of idolatry, as it was holding communion with idolaters in their idolatrous rites. To enforce his decision he reminded them of the example of the Israelites; and hence he inferred our text, "wherefore my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."

The two great sins forbidden in the first commandment are atheism and idolatry. The former in its several kinds has already been considered. We come now in this discourse to treat of the latter *Idolatry* as forbidden in the first commandment may be divided into two kinds, viz.

I. The worshipping as God anything beside or instead of the true God.

II. The giving to anything else that which is God's right, and due to him alone.

The first is the Pagan idolatry; the last prevails where the true God is acknowledged, and the worship of idols is discarded.

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I. With respect to the first kind, or the Pagan idolatry, some suppose it was practised before the flood, among the posterity of wicked Cain. Of this however we have no conclusive proof. Be this as it may, it is certain, idolatry was practised not long after the flood. It prevailed in Chaldea, at and before the time Abraham was called of God to leave that country. For we read Josh. xxiv. 2. "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor; and they served other gods." It is highly probable that Chaldea was the birth-place of idolatry. Agreeably to this we find it called, as it were by way of eminence, Jer. l. 38. "the land of graven images." And probably in allusion to the origin of idolatry in Babylon, the antichristian power is in the Revelation, under the name of Babylon, called, "the mother of abominations of the earth." Rev. xvii. 5.

Idolatry however was not long confined to Chaldea; but, soon overspread the world, except the family of Abraham; and his family too, except in the line of Isaac and Jacob, in which God was pleased to keep up his church, and which he favoured with a special revelation of truth. And even the children of Israel, notwithstanding they were in visible covenant with the true God, had the oracles of truth, and were frequently warned against idolatry, were often guilty of this sin. They were probably guilty of it while in bondage in Egypt. Their readiness to worship the calf which Aaron made at Sinai, and which was one of the Egyptian gods, is an argument in favour of this opinion; and the same appears to be clearly taught by a passage Ezek. xx. 6. 8. "In the day that I lifted up mine hand unto them, to bring them forth of the land of Egypt. Then said I unto them, cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me; they did not every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt." After the Israelites were established in the promised land, during the government of the judges and the reign of the kings, they often forsook the Lord, and worshipped the idols of the surrounding nations. And this was one leading sin, for which they were carried away from their own land into

captivity. The ten tribes were cast off by God, and never returned. The other two tribes endured a seventy years captivity in Babylon. After their return we never find them again falling into idolatry; but ever manifesting the most marked abhorence of it. Their sufferings on account of their former idolatry, probably, had some influence in effecting this change; but the principal cause of it probably was, the establishment of the synagogue worship; and the public reading of the Scriptures, every week, in every part of the land.

The earliest kind of idolatry is allowed to have been, the worship of the sun and the host of heaven. This appears to have been the only kind of idolatry practised in the time of Job, or the only kind with which he was acquainted. For in protesting his integrity he declared his innocence of this kind of idolatry, and mentioned no other. The worship of the souls of departed heroes appears to have succeeded that of the host of heaven; the worship of graven images followed; and in some countries especially in Egypt, they finally, descended to the worship of animals, rivers, and plants. This idolatry of which we have been speaking was not confined to the early ages of the world, when the efforts, discoveries, and influence of human reason were in their infancy; nor to savage nations enveloped in ignorance, and which had made no improvements in human science; but it prevailed in latter times, and in nations, where human science was esteemed and highly cultivated. It prevailed in Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the most polished, and learned of the ancient nations. And it prevailed at a period, when those nations had arrived at their summit of improvement. And as civilization, and improvements in human science advanced in these nations, the number of their gods were multiplied, and the absurdity of their idolatry increased; so that about the time of our Saviour, when human learning had reached perhaps the greatest summit of glory, to which it has ever yet attained, idolatry was also at its greatest height. Since that time, by means of the light and the power of the Gospel, idolatry has much decreased, and many nations have been rescued from its empire. But still there is a large portion of our world in which idolatry prevails. We however confidently look forward to the time when, according to the prophecies of the

Scriptures, men shall be rescued from the dominion of this deplorable blindness and the Heathen be given to Christ for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

Various causes contributed to the introduction and practice of idolatry in the world.

One leading cause was ignorance of the nature and character of the true God. It is probable that the sun, as being the most glorious object which met the eye, and at the same time one from which mankind received the inestimable benefits of light and heat, and being also one principal cause of vegetation, was the first object of idolatrous worship. Men probably supposed that this was the residence of the Deity; and the body in which the great Spirit dwelt. Receiving light from the other heavenly bodies in the absence of the sun, these also probably came by degrees to be considered as the residence and the bodies of divinities. The regard which men had to some great personages, and respect to their memory after they had departed this life, probably led to the placing them among the gods, and to this species of idolatry. Images were probably intended at first not to be the objects of worship; but only to remind men of the god whom they were intended to represent, and to be a means of exciting their devotions: but by degrees, through ignorance, what was at first intended, only to be the means to excite devotion, became the object of worship. The worship of brute animals, which prevailed, especially in Egypt, some suppose, originated from the great scarcity of useful animals, at an early period, in that country, which led the civil authority to enact laws for their preservation; and to give these laws the greater force, the priests gave out, that a divine virtue resided in certain animals, and the ignorance of the people prepared them to adopt this suggestion. The principle of fear probably led to the worship of noxious animals, such as crocodiles and serpents. Men supposed them to be animated by evil spirits, and to avert their wrath, they worshipped them.

Another cause of idolatry probably was the great distance between the Supreme Being and men, which led to a desire that there might be some order of beings superior to men and nearer God, whom they might more easi-

ly and familiarly approach, and obtain their interest with the supreme God in their behalf. It is probable that this desire in part first led to the worship of the host of heaven.

Another and a leading cause was, most probably, a dislike to the true character of the true God. The apostle speaking of the Heathen world Rom. i. 28. says, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." They did not like the true character of the true God, therefore they formed to themselves, ideas of God, more congenial with the corruptions of the human heart; and God being provoked at their wickedness gave them up to judicial blindness, to follow their own corrupt propensities.

We proceed to an illustration of the

II. Kind of idolatry forbidden by the first commandment, viz. the giving to any other object, that which is God's right and due to him alone. That this is a species of idolatry the scriptures teach. Thus Eph. v. 5. a covetous man is said to be an idolater. In Col. iii. 5. covetousness is called idolatry; and in Phil. iii. 19. we read of some whose god is their belly. In these passages there are two particular sins, which the Scriptures make idolatry, viz. covetousness, or an inordinate love of riches; and sensuality, or an inordinate attachment to sensual gratifications. And for the same reason that riches or our appetites may be called idols, and a supreme attachment to them, idolatry, may any created object, on which we supremely fix our affections, be called an idol, and a supreme attachment to it, idolatry. God demands all our hearts. Our supreme love and obedience are his due; his glory ought to be our chief end; and we ought to take him as our supreme good and portion. If then we give to anything else the supreme place in our affections, we are guilty of idolatry. If we more readily obey the will of the creature than that of the Creator; if we put our trust in the creature, instead of the Creator; if we pursue something else as our chief end instead of the glory of God; and if we esteem any thing else as the chief good, and choose it as our portion instead of God, we are idolaters and break the first commandment.

Hence, self is an idol, and self-seeking in opposition to the glory of God is idolatry. The riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, if they be esteemed the chief

good, or are pursued as our chief end, or have the supreme place in our affections, become idols to us; and our esteem, love and pursuit of them are idolatry. Friends also in this respect may and often do become idols, and our attachment to them, idolatry. In short, whatever we exalt in our estimation above God, and whatever we give the chief place in our hearts or our pursuits, we make an idol.

Let us now attend to an improvement of this subject.

1. We learn from what has been said on the Pagan idolatry, the exceeding blindness and depravity of human nature. Surely that nature must be exceedingly blinded and depraved, which is capable of the excess, into which the Heathen world went, on the subject of religion. We have here a picture of human nature calculated to humble us. Who or what maketh us to differ? It is not because our nature differs from that of those who went into such excess; but it is owing to the light of revealed truth, and especially the light and influence of the New Testament, that we are not idolaters.

2. From the situation of the Pagan world, contrasted with our own, we learn the excellency of the Gospel. That it is owing to the light of the Gospel, and not to the efforts of human reason, that we are not idolaters, is evident. What human reason could do on this subject has been sufficiently tried. The Gentile world were for ages left to its guidance; and while they advanced in human science, instead of becoming more and more enlightened on the subject of religion, they became more and more darkened, the number of their gods were multiplied, and the absurdity of their idolatry increased. "The world by wisdom knew not God." 1 Cor. i. 21. But the preaching of the Gospel effected what the wisdom of the world could not do. Wherever it was received, it turned men from the service of dumb idols. It banished Polytheism and idolatry. It cast down the Heathen temples and altars. It convinced men of the unity of the Godhead, and that he is not like unto gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device. And it has done more. It has banished from countries where it has been received some enormous vices, and it has imposed restraints upon others. Many of the Heathen gods, were, according to their ideas, addicted to many vices, and even patrons of par-

ticular vices; and the worship which was rendered them was like them—replete with wickedness. Many vices unknown in christian countries, were publicly practised, and some were even sanctioned by law. Many of the vices which were practised in Heathen lands, have been banished from society where the gospel has been received, and others are forbidden by law, and frowned upon by public opinion. It is certain that it is the influence of the gospel which has banished from what is now called Christendom idolatry with its attendant enormities. Our forefathers were Pagans, when the gospel first came among them; and if it had not been for the influence of Revelation, we would now be idolaters. We would now instead of offering our devotions to the true God, be worshipping the host of heaven, graven images, stocks, and stones—we would be sacrificing our children to Moloch or Saturn, or some equally cruel Deity, and engaging in all the other shocking rites of the Heathen religion, and practising all its monstrous vices. How excellent therefore is the gospel! And what reason have we of gratitude for such an inestimable gift! What a great account will we have to render for it! How aggravated will be our punishment, if we despise or neglect it! And what enemies to human happiness are those who wish to see this divine gift banished from the earth!

3. Is the state of the Heathen world so wretched as we have seen? Has the gospel where it has been received, banished idolatry? And is there a large portion of our world still in the darkness and wretchedness of Paganism? It is then the duty of those, who have been delivered from idolatry, to feel for those who are yet sunk in Heathenish darkness; to pray that the gospel may be sent unto them; and according to their ability and opportunity, to aid benevolent exertions for this end.

4. From what has been said of that kind of idolatry which prevails in a christian land, or the giving to any other object that which is God's right and due to him alone, we may derive much instruction. We ought to be led to self-examination. If we habitually give the chief place in our hearts to anything besides God, we cannot be his people. God must be upon the throne in our hearts, or we are none of his. "No man (saith Christ) can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one

and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon," Mat. vi. 24. And again, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me," Mat. x. 37. Let us therefore examine ourselves, whether any idol reigns in our hearts; and if so, it must be dethroned, be it ever so dear to us, and God must be enthroned in our hearts, if we would enter into his heavenly kingdom. We discard the Pagan idolatry. Let us be careful while we do this, that we do not cherish the other kind of idolatry which we have been considering; for this also is very odious in the sight of God.

Christians have cause to attend to our text as well as others; for it is remarkable that it was addressed by the Apostle, particularly to professing christians. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." God is enthroned in the heart of every real christian; but still there are in his heart remains of idolatry as well as other sins. There is such a thing as loving and pursuing the world and its possessions and enjoyments in subordination to the glory of God. But christians are in danger of loving, pursuing and enjoying the creature, not in subordination, but in opposition to their duty to God. To seek and love the creature in subordination to the Creator, is right; but to suffer the creature to become a rival to the Creator, and an ultimate instead of a subordinate object of pursuit, affection, and enjoyment, is wrong. And how often is this the case with the christian! How often does the world divide our hearts, and as one expresses it, "leave but half for God." Instead of being instrumental in leading us to glorify God more, as it ought to be, it distracts our minds from him, and causes us to glorify him less. Against this species of idolatry, christians ought to guard. God will not suffer a rival in your hearts; and if he loves you, and you have idols which are drawing your hearts away from him, you may expect that he will either take away your idols, or embitter them to you.

And here we may remark that in the observations just made, we may find a reason why the people of God are sometimes afflicted; why their friends are sometimes taken away from them, or are suffered so to act as to disappoint their fond expectation; and why the world is some-

times either taken from them, when they have had it in their possession, or withheld from them when they are in the pursuit of it, or its enjoyments are in some way or other embittered to them. It is because these things were cherished as idols, or were dividing and lessening their affections towards God, their trust in him, and their estimation of him as their only portion. Or God foresaw that this would be the event. Let christians therefore guard against idolatry and flee from it. And if God has taken away their idols, and thereby has brought them nearer to himself, they have reason of thankfulness for his salutary chastisements, instead of murmuring at his dispensations; and to say with the Psalmist, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted." Ps. cxix. 71. If we have idols, it is an instance of God's displeasure, to let us alone. For it was an awful instance of God's displeasure against Ephraim, when he was joined to idols, that he said, "let him alone," Hos. iv. 17. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry."—Amen.

SERMON LXIII.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX 4, 5, 6.

"*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*"

The difference between the first and second commandments appears to be, that the first respects the object, and the second the means of worship. The first requires us

to worship and glorify the true God, and forbids us to have or to worship any other being as God, with, or instead of, the true God, and to give to any other being that glory which is due to him alone; the second requires us to worship the true God in the way that he has appointed, and forbids us to worship him in any other way.

The duties required in this commandment, we have stated in our Catechism in the answer to the 50th question.

"*What is required in the second commandment?—*

The second commandment requireth, the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances, as God hath appointed in his word."

The sins forbidden in this commandment, are summarily contained in the answer to the next question.

"*What is forbidden in the second commandment?*

"*The second commandment forbiddeth the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in his word.*"

The reasons by which obedience to this commandment is enforced, we have stated in the answer to the next question.

"*What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?*

"*The reasons annexed to the second commandment, are, God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath to his own worship.*"

In the ensuing discourse we shall consider,—

I. The duties required in the second commandment.

II. The sins forbidden, and

III. The reasons annexed to enforce obedience to the commandment.

I. The *duties* required.—The great duty required is to worship God in such a way as he has directed in his word. The ordinances which God hath appointed to be the means of worship, are such as the following, viz. prayer, reading, preaching and hearing of the word, singing praises, administration and receiving the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper, church-government and discipline, instruction of children, religious conference, fasting, special thanksgiving, meditation, self-examination, and perhaps some others. In these and all other ordinances of God's appointment, it becomes us to worship him. It is our duty to receive and observe them, and keep them pure and entire.

1. This commandment requires us to *receive* the ordinances which God hath appointed. This implies that we know what they are; and to obtain this knowledge, it is our duty to study the word of God, in which we are taught, what are the ordinances that God hath appointed. Knowing what they are, it becomes us to approve of them in our minds, and to feel and acknowledge that they are binding upon us.

2. The second commandment requires us to *observe* the ordinances of God's appointment; that is to wait upon God and worship him in the use of them. Hence to observe his ordinances, is to pray unto him in secret and in our families, to unite in the public prayers of the congregation, to read and search his word, to attend upon the public preaching of it, to sing his praises, to meditate upon divine truth, to examine ourselves, to come to the sacraments, and in short, with a proper frame of mind, to wait upon God, in the use of all the means of grace, which he hath appointed.

3. This commandment requireth us to *keep* the ordinances which are of divine appointment, *pure* and *entire*. We are to observe all the ordinances of God's appointment, in the manner which he has pointed out, where he has prescribed the manner. We are to add no new ordinance of our own invention. And we are to disapprove of, and hate, and according to our place and calling, to oppose, prevent, and remove, as far as in us lies, all false worship, or all worship, either forbidden, or not warranted in the word of God.

We proceed

II. To consider the *sins* forbidden in this commandment.

1. They sin against this commandment, who *omit* the duties required. Hence, they who despise the ordinances of divine worship, break this commandment; and they also who take away any of them. Hence they who deny baptism, the Lord's supper, and singing the praises of God are guilty of a breach of this commandment.

Further, they break this commandment, who, while they acknowledge the ordinances of worship to be obligatory, neglect to observe them. Hence they who neglect prayer, reading the Scriptures, attendance on the public worship of God's house, the sacraments, or any

other of the ordinances which God has appointed, are guilty of a breach of this commandment. And further, they also are guilty of the same, who although they externally attend upon, and observe, the ordinances of worship, yet do not attend upon them with a holy frame of mind, and do not observe them with their hearts. The law is spiritual, and the second as well as all the other commandments, refers to the temper, thoughts, desires, and intentions of the mind, as well as to the outward actions. God requires, "My son, give me thine heart." Prov. xxiii. 26. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth," John iv. 24.

2. The worshipping of God by *images* is a transgression of this commandment. This is the principal sin forbidden. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them. This prohibits the making of any image of the Deity for any purpose, or any image whatever to be used in religious worship, whether it be intended to be the object of worship, or only a means to excite and assist in devotion. But it does not forbid the making of images of persons and things, whether by the sculpturist or the painter, if these images are not to be used in religious worship.

The use of images in worship has been for a long time, and still is practised in the Roman Catholic and Greek churches. They began to be introduced into some churches, as early as the fourth century of the christian era, and were for many centuries much opposed, and at times occasioned much disturbance; but were finally established. And here a question naturally arises. Is the use of images in worship, such as the representation of the Deity, and the image of the Saviour, of the Virgin Mother, of the cross, or of anything else when used as means of worship, right? This question, I would decidedly answer in the negative. In support of this decision, we may observe,

1. The use of images in worship is directly contrary to the plain letter of the second commandment. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or the likeness of any thing" (anything whatever, whether, God or

the creature) "that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." It is evident that the making unto ourselves images to be used in worship, whether they are used as the object, or only as the means of worship, is in direct opposition to the plain letter of this commandment. Of the same import is the following passage Deut. iv. 15, 16, 23. "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves, for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire, lest ye corrupt yourselves. and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female. Take good heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing which the Lord thy God hath forbidden thee."

2. That the use of images as means of worship are wrong may be proved from some examples in Scripture. The calf which Aaron made at Horeb, appears to have been considered not as God, though it is called a God; but only as an image or representation of the true God, in whom they still believed; for "Aaron built an altar before it; and made proclamation, and said, to-morrow is a feast to the Lord." Ex. xxxii. 5. And the same may be observed of the calves which Jeroboam king of Israel made. They appear to have been intended not as the objects of worship in themselves, but only as symbols of the Deity to assist them in their devotions. But both these instances are pointedly condemned in the Scriptures.

3. The same may be argued from this consideration, that any representation of the Deity or of the Saviour, must fall so far short of the reality, that it has a tendency rather to give us low and improper thoughts, than to animate our devotions.

4. Admitting that images are at first introduced only to be helps to devotion; yet they are very liable to be abused, and by degrees to become, especially to the ignorant, objects of worship. It is highly probable, if not certain, that the Pagan worship of images as gods, took its rise, from sensible representations or images of God, made at first with what may perhaps be called a pious intention, not to be the objects of worship, but means to remind them of the Supreme Being, and to assist their de-

votions. But we know that the consequence was, that these images soon became the objects of worship, and had a religious homage paid to them. And whatever may have been the original intention of introducing images into christian churches, the history of the churches which have sanctioned and maintained them, abundantly prove, that an idolatrous veneration has often been paid to them.

5. We may observe once more that the christian church in the first centuries, did not admit the use of them; for they were not introduced until after the time of Constantine, when there were many innovations made; when vital piety was fast declining, and corruption rapidly increasing; and when the church was filled with worldly and wealthy men, who entered it from secular motives.—And they were opposed by those whose doctrine and life declared them to be the real people of God. From all these considerations we conclude that the use of images of any kind, in worship, even when they are intended only to be the means of promoting devotion is wrong, and contrary to the law of God.

3. The second commandment forbids, not only the worshipping of God by images, but in any other way not appointed in his word. This class of sins against the second commandment, may be included under the general term *superstition* or *will-worship*, which signifies an excess in religion, or doing things not required by the word of God, or abstaining from things not forbidden. Superstition is expressly forbidden under the name of will-worship, Col. ii. 20, 22, 23. "Why as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances—after the commandments and doctrines of men! Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship." The same is condemned Deut. iv. 2. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." And Mat. xv. 9. "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Of this superstition or will-worship we have many instances in the numerous rites and ordinances, which the Romish church, have either superadded to those taught in the Scripture, or substituted in their place. Such are the holding to seven sacraments instead of two;

the using of the wafer instead of bread, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper; the withholding the cup from the laity; the lifting up the bread in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, pretending that it is the real body of Christ, and bowing before it and worshipping it; the use of spittle, salt, and cream, besides water, annointing with oil, and signing with the sign of the cross in badtism; the observance of stated fasts for a certain number of days; fasting statedly on certain days of the week; and abstaining from certain kinds of food while others are allowed. There are numerous other rites and ordinances of a similar kind.—All these for which there is no command or warrant in the word of God, are superstition or will-worship, and are forbidden by the second commandment.

It is true there are certain circumstances respecting the ordinances of worship, concerning which, there is nothing determined in the word of God, but which are left to the discretion of the church; such are the time and place, and the like circumstances of worship. But for the church to fix and change these according as conveniency may require, is very different from undertaking to introduce new ordinaces, or to superadd to an ordinance something which the word of God does not warrant. We proceed,

III. To consider the *reasons* annexed to this commandment to enforce obedience to it. These reasons we have contained in the following words; "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."—The reasons contained in these words may be included under three particulars, viz. God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he hath for his own worship.

1. God's *sovereignty.* "I the Lord." This expresses the essential existence of God. God's sovereignty is founded in his being what he is. He has an essential right to reign, and therefore to give us such laws as he pleases; and it is our duty to obey his commandments. This reason runs thus, I am the Lord, the sovereign of all my creatures, whose will is always law; therefore thou shalt [illegible]ally my command, not to make unto thee any graven ima[illegible] and

the likeness of anything &c. thou shalt receive, observe, and keep pure and entire, the ordinances of worship appointed in my word ; and shalt not worship me by images, nor by any ordinances and rites of thine own invention.

2. God's *propriety* in us. "I the Lord thy God." This brings into view the covenant of grace as a reason why we should observe the second commandment ; for it is in the covenant of grace alone that God offers himself to be, or does become the sinner's God.—God has a property in us arising not only from his being what he is ; but also from the relations he sustains to us of Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer, and especially from the latter. This is the relation particularly intended in the phrase, "thy God." He is a covenant God, and Redeemer. He offers himself in this character to all who hear the gospel ; and his visible people have avouched him to be their God. Therefore he has a right to give us laws ; and it is our duty to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire his religious institutions, and not invent any of our own.

3. The third reason by which obedience to the second commandment is enforced is the *zeal* which God hath for his own worship, which we have expressed in these words ; "a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." Jealous here signifies an earnest regard for his own institutions. He is a sovereign and has a right to prescribe to his creatures the ordinances by which he will be worshipped ; and he has an earnest regard for the glory of his sovereignty, and will not suffer another, with impunity, to endeavour to take it from him, either by slighting his institutions, or by assuming his prerogative and inventing ordinances of their own. This jealousy or zeal which he hath for his own worship is shown,

1. By his accounting the breakers of this commandment, such as hate him, and threatening to punish them unto the third and fourth generations. "Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." The import of this argument appears to be as follows—False worship is such convincing evidence of hatred to God ; and God so

hates false worship, that he will not only punish the immediate transgressor, but will also punish his posterity unto the third and fourth generation.

That the iniquities of the fathers are in the course of divine providence often visited upon the children is a fact of which we have abundant proof in history, both sacred and profane, and also in instances which have come under our own observation. We have often seen children and chilren's children, injured in a temporal respect by the parents' misconduct and sins. And the conduct of parents has doubtless a great influence on the spiritual and eternal interests of their children. Where parents set a bad example before their children, or do not set a good one; where they give them bad advice, or neglect to iustruct them in the knowledge of divine things; where they despise or neglect the ordinances of divine appointment, live in neglect of prayer, attention to the Scriptures, and the public worship and ordinances of God's house; and especially where they practice false worship—do we not find that, although, there are exceptions, yet generally, their children grow up, and live as their parents did? I believe our own observation must convince us that this is generally the case. Further we must either admit that it is so or else deny the importance of a religious education, which is directly contrary to the Scriptures. Hence we have reason to believe that many children live and die irreligious, and go to misery, who if they had been placed in a different situation in the world, and had had different examples and instructions, from their parents, would have embraced true piety and obtained eternal salvation. We must admit this, or deny what every day's experience proves, viz. the influence of example and instruction; and also what the word of God every where teaches, viz. the influence of the means of grace and especially the efficacy of prayer. So that however we may feel towards this declaration, that God will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, facts teach us it is so; and will not the judge of all the earth do right?

And here I would further observe, that children may suffer in this life for the iniquities of the parent, where they do make his sin their own. As for instance, if the parent be a drunkard, the children are often materially injured through life, in their respectability, estate, and

temporal comfort, by his sin, though they do not copy his example. But as it respects a future world, children will not be punished for the sins of parents, unless they make their sins, their own. It is true, there is very great danger that they will follow their example ; but if they do not, they will not be involved in their guilt and ruin.

This threatening ought to be duly considered by parents ; and a regard to their children, as well as to their own souls, ought to lead them to love God, and keep his commandments, and especially to receive and observe the ordinances of his worship. By his providential dealings with the posterity of those who despise, slight, or neglect his ordinances, he manifests his zeal for his worship.

The reason why the third and fourth generation" are particularly mentioned some suppose to be, that natural affection will not operate further, because parents cannot expect to see more of their descendants, and are less concerned about their remote posterity ; or it may imply, that as the Lord is ready to forgive, the effects of sin in the parents will cease after that period, unless the children persist in the sins of the parents.

2. God's jealousy or zeal for his own worship is further manifested, by his esteeming its observers, such as love him, and promising mercy unto them and to their posterity. " And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments." By showing mercy unto thousands of them that love him, it is generally supposed, we are to understand the thousandth generation, that is a great many generations. This exposition is confirmed by other passages. Thus Deut. v. 29. we read, " O, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children *forever*." And in the days of the Apostle Paul the degenerate Jews were called, " beloved for the father's sake's." Rom. xi. 28. And we are assured in the Scriptures, that they shall yet, on account of their connexion with faithful Abraham, be brought into the church of Christ, and be made the subjects of spiritual blessings.

What a blessing therefore is it to have pious parents ! And how important is it that parents should be faithful, especially in their observance of the ordinances of God,

and in teaching them to their children, since according to the second commandment, children and posterity are so much concerned in the parent's character and conduct. May these reasons have their due weight upon our minds And may God give us all, a temper of obedience to all his holy commandments.—AMEN.

SERMON LXIV.

DUTIES REQUIRED IN THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 7.

" *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*"

The spirit of this commandment appears to be, to regulate the *manner* of worshipping God. As the first commandment relates to the object, and the second to the means, so the third relates to the *manner* of worship.

The commandment is expressed negatively, " thou shalt *not* take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." But as in the other commandments, so in this, duties are required as well as sins forbidden.

By the *name* of God in this commandment, we are to understand, not only the names by which he is called; but every thing by which he maketh himself known. In this sense our Catechism explain the word; and this explanation is warranted by the Scriptures. Thus when Moses at the burning bush asked the Lord his name; he answered, "I AM that I AM: thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you." F[illegible] iii. 14. Here name signifies a title. When at Si[illegible] ses besought the Lord to show him his glory, [illegible] to proclaim the *Name* of the Lord, Ex. [illegible]. 23. "Unto "And the Lord passed by before him, a[illegible] the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gr[illegible]

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fering, and abundant in goodness and truth, &c." Ex. xxxiv. 6. Here the name of the Lord signifies his attributes. Again Mal. i. 6, 7. "Ye say, wherein have we despised thy *name?* Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar." Here, by the name of the Lord is evidently meant the ordinances of his worship. Again the Psalmist, Ps. cxxxviii. 2. saith, "thou hast magnified thy word, above all thy *name;*" which teaches us that the name of the Lord may signify his word. Again, the Psalmist, Ps. viii. 9. after speaking of the works of God exclaims, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy *name* in all the earth"—where by his name, his works are evidently meant. Hence from comparing one part of Scripture with another, which is the true way of expounding God's word, we are warranted to adopt the explanation of our Catechism, that by the name of God, in the third commandment, is meant every thing by which he maketh himself known; and particularly his names, properly so called, his titles, his attributes, his ordinances, his word, and his works.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate the duties required in the third commandment.

These duties are stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the 54th question, as follows, viz.

"*What is required in the third commandment?*

"*The third commandment requireth the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.*"

The names of the Supreme Being are God, Lord, and Jehovah.—His titles are such as Lord of hosts, Holy One of Israel, Creator, Preserver of men, King of kings, Lord of lords, Father of mercies, &c. His attributes are those perfections and properties, by which he distinguisheth himself from his creatures, such as infinity, eternity, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, infinite wisdom, holiness, &c. His ordinances are prayer, preaching and hearing the word, sacraments, and the like. His word is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. And his works are those of creation, providence, and redemption.

The duty required in the third commandment is to use all these with reverence. By reverence is meant an awe and fear, under a sense of the divine greatness. Whenever we use anything by which God maketh himself known, it becomes us to be filled with reverence under a

sense of the majesty of that God who is thus made known. It becomes us to think of God with a solemn awe—when we use any of his names, titles or attributes, either in religious worship or in conversation, it becomes us to do it with seriousness and solemnity, and impressed with a reverential awe of the greatness of that Being, who is meant by these names or titles, or to whom these attributes belong. It becomes us to attend upon his ordinances, with seriousness and reverence, impressed with a solemn awe of the majesty of that God who manifests himself, and is worshipped in these ordinances; for, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him," Ps. LXXXIX. 7. It becomes us to read, hear, and speak of his word with seriousness, and with a deep reverence of that God who gave it, and who makes himself known by it. And it becomes us in contemplating his works, to regard him as their author, and be filled with a reverence of him, whose power and wisdom shine forth in these works.

Having made these general observations on the duties required in the third commandment, we shall in the remainder of this discourse, attend particularly to religious oaths, vows, and lots, the consideration of which belongs to the head of the third commandment.

An *oath* is a solemn appeal to God as the searcher of hearts, for the truth of what we say, and implies an imprecation of his judgments, both in time and through eternity, if we do not speak the truth.

That such appeals to God, on certain occasions, are lawful, and duty, appears clearly from his word. The principal thing forbidden in the third commandment appears to be a swearing falsely by the name of God, which implies that there is a lawful swearing by his name. Of the same import is a passage, Lev. xix. 12. "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely," which evidently implies the duty of swearing truly by his name. The duty is also taught in the following passages, Deut. vi. 13. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name." Deut. x. 20. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God: him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name." Is. XLV. 23. "Unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Is. LXV. 16. "He that sweareth in the earth shall swear by

the God of truth." Jer. iv. 2. "Thou shalt swear, the Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment and in righteousness." And Heb. vi. 16. "Men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." From these texts it is evident, that an oath, properly made, is lawful and a duty.

The same is confirmed by several examples in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, we have several instances of the people of God swearing by his name. And in the New Testament we frequently find Paul making a solemn appeal to God, for the truth of what he said. In the Revelation we read that an angel shall in the last day swear by him that liveth forever and ever that time shall be no longer. And we have also, in the Scriptures, frequent instances of the great God himself swearing by himself. All these examples prove the lawfulness of oaths, on proper occasions.

They who object to the lawfulness of oaths under the christian dispensation, found their objections on a misconstruction of a few passages, such as that of our Saviour, Mat. v. 34. "Swear not at all." And that of James, v. 12. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not." But we must explain Scripture consistently with itself; and it is certain, oaths were frequently practised and were lawful under the Old Testament; and also that in the New Testament, Paul spake of an oath for confirmation being an end of all strife, which implied that they were still lawful; and that he himself made frequent solemn appeals to God. Hence if the texts on which the objection is founded can be explained not to mean a solemn religious swearing, we are bound thus to explain them. They may signify swearing in a profane way, and by the creature. It is said that at this time the Jews were much addicted to swearing in common conversation, and supposed it to be no crime, if they swore by the creature, as by heaven, by Jerusalem, by their head, and the like, and did not use the name of God.—Against this opinion and practice, the above texts appear to have been pointed; and not against a religious swearing, when properly called to it.

Having thus shown that oaths on certain occasions are lawful and a duty; it will be proper to inquire as to the form and manner in which oaths ought to be administered and taken, the occasion which warrants them, and the different kinds.

The form is of small importance. Various ceremonies are recorded in the Scriptures as having been used in taking an oath. When Jacob and Laban took a solemn oath to each other, they erected a heap of stones, and ate together upon it, and sware to each other. When Abraham made his servant swear, he ordered him to put his hand under his thigh. But the most common form of swearing, used of old, appears to have been the lifting up the hand to heaven. Thus Abraham sware Gen. xiv. 22. Thus the angel sware, Dan. xii. 7.; and also the angel, Rev. x. 5. And indeed the lifting up the hand to heaven, and swearing, in Scripture import the same thing. Thus, Deut. xxxii. 40. "I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live forever." This form of swearing by lifting up the hand to heaven, is the preferable mode, because it most frequently occurs in the Scripture history, and it is sanctioned by the highest authority, even by the example of the most eminent saints, and of angels, and of God himself. As to the form generally used in this land, in taking an oath, by laying the hand on the Bible, and kissing the book, we have no example or precept for it in the Scriptures, and therefore it is not so eligible as lifting the hand to heaven. But as it is the legal form, and the thing principally to be looked at in an oath, is the solemn appeal to God therein made, whatever be the form of making it; and as there were various forms used in the Scripture times, besides that of lifting the hand, and were not condemned, it may be proper for christians to comply with the form in common use.

As to the manner in which an oath ought to be administered and taken.—It ought to be administered with great solemnity, calculated to fill the person who takes it with a solemn awe and fear of that God to whom he makes an appeal; and where the nature of an oath is not known or fully understood, it ought to be explained. The person who takes an oath, ought to do it with a due impression of its solemn import, and filled with reverence of the Being whom he calls to witness, and be strictly careful as he would avoid his wrath, that he utter nothing false, or of which he has the least doubt.

As to the occasion on which an oath ought to be taken, we may observe, that such a solemn appeal to God ought not to be made on every trivial occasion. An oath

is an act of religious worship, in which there is an acknowledgment of the divine perfections, and an appeal to God as the searcher of hearts. The matter therefore which calls for such an appeal, ought to be of importance. And the multiplying of oaths, and taking them on every trivial occasion, is trifling with the name of God, lessens very much the solemnity of an oath, increases the danger of frequent perjury, and is a serious evil to society.

Oaths are of two kinds, *assertory* and *promissory*. An *assertory* oath respects evidence relative to things done. A *promissory* oath, hath respect to things to be done, in which we oblige ourselves to do them, and call God to witness our sincerity in making the promise, and imprecate his judgments in case we do not fulfil our promise.

In making a promissory oath the following things should be observed.

1. The thing promised to be done ought to be lawful. We ought not to swear to do any thing repugnant to the law of God, or to the legitimate obedience which we owe to the civil magistrate. Of this nature was the oath which the more than forty Jews took, that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul, Acts. xxiii. 12. Such oaths are in their very nature unlawful and wicked, and ought not to be kept. Not that they can be broken without sin. It is a great sin to make such oaths; but it would be a still greater sin to keep and fulfil them.

2. The thing promised ought to be such that it can be performed. If we promise an impossibility the oath is not binding. If the impossibility is known at the time of making the oath, it is a rash, presumptuous, and wicked action, and the sin consists not in breaking such an oath but in making it. But if the impossibility does not appear, or is not known or suspected at the time of making the oath, but in the course of Providence arises afterwards, the oath is not binding; nor are we chargeable with taking God's name in vain, either in making or breaking such an oath.

3. A person ought to be possessed of the exercise of his reason to make an oath binding upon him.

4. A promissory oath, according to some, to be binding, ought to be made voluntarily. But it is at least questionable, whether an oath extorted by force is not binding on the conscience? On this subject casuists differ. If the

speaker were to express an opinion, it would be that such an oath is binding. Men ought either not to swear, but to risk consequences; or else they ought sacredly to perform what they have called God to witness they will do. In support of this opinion is a passage, Ps. xv. 4. spoken of a citizen of Zion—"He sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not." And here I would observe as a qualification of the above, that the thing thus promised, to be binding, must affect only our own private interest, and not the interest of another or the public good.

5. If a promissory oath is made conditionally, it is binding only on the condition on which it is made. As for instance, if I bind myself by oath to do a certain benefit to another, on condition that such an event take place, or the other person do something else,—if the event does not take place, or the other person does not fulfil the condition, I am not bound by my oath.

6. If a person binds himself by oath to do something to another, if the person to whom he has bound himself sees fit to discharge him from his oath, the obligation to perform it ceases.

Keeping these exceptions in view, where a promissory oath has been made, by a person in the exercise of his reason, binding himself to the performance of a thing lawful, and possible to be performed, and if it be conditional the condition has been fulfilled, and if it be made to do some benefit to another, who has not discharged him from the obligation, he ought most sacredly to keep and fulfil what he has sworn to do. Though he has sworn to his own hurt, or the injury of his own private worldly interest, he cannot change or break his oath, without perjuring himself and incurring great guilt in the sight of God.

And here I would remark that oaths taken by civil officers, for the faithful discharge of their duty, are promissory oaths. Every thing promised ought therefore to be well considered; and no person ought to take an oath of office, unless he sincerely intends to perform every particular of the duties, which he thus solemnly engages to perform; and after having taken such an oath, he ought to feel the awfully solemn situation in which he is placed, as having called the great God to witness that he will perform such and such duties, and imprecated his wrath

if he does not; and he ought to study his duty, and however difficult or unpopular the faithful performance of it may be, he cannot neglect it without great guilt in the sight of God; and the oath under which he has brought himself ought to weigh down every consideration of personal ease or popularity. Alas! have we not reason to fear that oaths of office are too often considered, as mere introductory forms, while the great obligations under which they bring a person are forgotten, or slighted, and neglected, and thus great guilt incurred?

There are two other points which ought to be considered while treating of oaths.

The first is whether equivocations and mental reservations can release a person from the obligation of an oath, according to the received meaning of its expressions. Many, especially in the church of Rome, have plead for the lawfulness of equivocations and mental reservations. But they defeat the very end of an oath, which the apostle tells us is for confirmation, and the end of strife. They are a species of deceit; for the words which are intended to communicate the thoughts of the heart convey an impression different from the reality; and this deceit is covered, and mankind the more easily imposed upon, by an appeal to God. Breaking an oath under such pretences, as that we meant something different from the plain meaning of the words we used, or that we made a reserve in our own minds, is perjury, and may we not add perjury aggravated by intentional deception.

The other point is, whether oaths made to those we esteem heretics ought to be kept. The Papal church in the Council of Constance determined this question in the negative. On this principle they acted towards the pious John Huss and Jerome of Prague. To induce them to appear before the Council at Constance, the Emperor of Germany had sworn to them that they should be protected from violence, and sent back safe; but when they appeared, the Council determined that faith was not to be kept with heretics, and accordingly condemned and put them to death. On the same principle when kings were excommunicated, or embraced the principles of the Reformation, the Pope undertook to absolve their subjects from their oaths of allegiance to them.

Many arguments might be adduced from Scripture to

refute this pernicious error. Let the following examples suffice. The Gibeonites were Heathen, and they belonged to those very wicked nations whom the Lord had devoted to destruction, whom the Israelites were commissioned to destroy, and with whom they were at war. To these Heathen the Israelites, in the days of Joshua bound themselves by oath, that they would not cut them off. This oath was obtained by stratagem. But notwithstanding their character, and the manner in which they had obtained the oath in their favour, the Israelites dare not cut them off. And when many years after, Saul slew some of them, the Lord sent a famine of three years upon the land, as a punishment for the breach of the oath; and the judgment was not removed until satisfaction was made to the Gibeonites, by the execution of such a number of the posterity of Saul as they demanded—2. Sam. xxi. Another example in point we have in the history of Zedekiah king of Judah. Zedekiah bound himself by oath to the Heathen king Nebuchadnezzar, to be his tributary; and this oath he afterwards brake by revolting from him. Did he do right? The Lord himself has answered the question, Ezek. xvii. 15, 16. "Shall he prosper? Shall he escape that doeth such things or shall he break the covenant and be delivered? As I live saith the Lord God, surely in the place, where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die." These instances are a sufficient refutation of the principle that oaths made to heretics are not binding.

We shall now conclude this discourse with a few words on vows and lots.

A *vow* is of the same nature with a promissory oath. The only difference is that in vows the thing promised to be done, is promised to God. A vow is a solemn act of religious worship, in which we solemnly devote any thing to God. Most of the observations which have been made respecting oaths may be applied to vows.

The *lot* is also a religious ordinance, as it is a referring the decision of an affair to God, and is an appeal to him for an immediate determination. We have many instances of the use of the lot in Scripture. By lot the land of Canaan was divided to the Hebrew tribes. By lot it was

determined which should be the goat for sacrifice, and which the scape-goat, on the great day of atonement. By lot was Achan pointed out as having the accursed thing. By lot was Saul designated to be king—and by lot was Matthias marked out for the apostleship in the place of Judas. Whether the lot, as a religious ordinance, is still proper to be used, is a doubtful question. But if it is, it ought to be used only in cases of importance, and which cannot otherwise be determined; but I doubt whether it be right for a christian in any case since the canon of Scripture has been completed, to take this method to find out the will of providence in a doubtful matter.

I conclude with exhorting you my brethren to a reverent use of every thing by which God maketh himself known. He is a God jealous for the glory of his name, and will not suffer it to be trifled with, with impunity.—AMEN.

SERMON LXV.

SINS AGAINST THE THIRD COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX 7.

"*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*"

In the last discourse, the duties required in this commandment were illustrated. The sins forbidden next claim our attention.

"*What is forbidden in the third commandment?*

The third commandment forbiddeth the profaning or abusing of any thing whereby God maketh himself known."

God maketh himself known, by his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works. Therefore this commandment forbids the profaning or abusing of any of these.

The particular ways in which this commandment may be broken are numerous. We shall endeavour in the ensuing discourse to particularize them, omitting the two leading sins of profane swearing and perjury, which will require distinct discourses.

I. In respect to God's names, titles, and attributes, this commandment is broken.

1. As the law is spiritual, and this commandment as well as the others refers to the heart, by thinking slightly and irreverently of the names, titles, or attributes of God.

2. Much more is this commandment broken, by using them in common conversation, in a light and irreverent manner. Thus the common practice of exclaiming in conversation, O Lord! O God! Lord of mercy! God Almighty! God forgive me! and the like; and even those common exclamations, gracious! mercy; &c. are a taking God's names in vain, and a breach of this commandment. In this way is this commandment often broken, and the solemn caution is forgotten, "that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the LORD thy GOD." Deut. xxviii. 58.

3. This commandment is broken by ascribing any of the divine names, titles, or attributes, to the creature. The application of the names lord and god to men in a certain sense, is made in Scripture. Thus Sarah called Abraham lord, Gen. xviii. 12. And she is commended for it in the New-Testament, 1. Peter iii. 6. And we have other instances of the application of the name to men. And magistrates are called gods. "Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people." Ex. xxii. 28. "I have said ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High." Ps. lxxxii. 6. In these places these names are simply expressive of authority; and are not intended in the least to give divine honour to the creature. But whenever these names are applied to creatures, to ascribe divine honours to them, such a use of them is sinful, and a palpable breach of this commandment; as when Herod "made an oration unto the people, and they gave a shout, saying it is the voice of a god, and not of a man." Acts xii. 21, 22. This was a most wicked application of the name to a creature intended to ascribe to him divine honours; and God was displeased with it, and in a signal

manner, punished the proud mortal who dared to receive it. And here we may remark, that many of the titles which are given to the kings of the earth, and which they proudly assume are, as belonging to God alone, in opposition to this commandment.

4. This commandment is broken by *blasphemy*. Blasphemy is a speaking reproachfully of God, or of any of the persons of the Trinity, either by denying the divine being, perfections, or providence ; or cursing, or ridiculing them ; or ascribing to God something sinful. According to this definition which is agreeable to the definitions, both of Theologians and Civilians, the Atheist who denies the being of God, the Epicurean who denies the providence of God, the Deist who denies the word of God, the Unitarian, as he proudly calls himself, who denies divine nature and honours to Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, the Scoffer who reviles or ridicules revealed religion—all these are blasphemers, as well as those who speak directly against God.

Blasphemy is an exceedingly great sin, and shows dreadful depravity of heart. That heart must truly be depraved to an uncommon and very great degree, that dares thus to bid as it were open defiance to God himself and explicitly assail his character and arraign his conduct. The Lord has in his word, showed the most marked and decided abhorrence of this sin. According to the law, delivered by God himself to Moses, the blasphemer was to be punished with death. As we read. Lev. xxiv. 15, 16. " And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him ; as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death." It was for this crime, that an Israelitish youth, of whom we have an account in this same chapter, was by the express direction of God, stoned to death by the congregation. And it was particularly for this crime, that the Lord visited Sennacherib king of Assyria with signal and awful judgments. One hundred and eighty five thousand of his army were slain in one night. And vengeance followed the king himself, in his own person, until he was shortly after cut off by the hands of his own children. As

we read 2 Kings xix. 22, 28, 35, &c. " whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed ? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on High ? even against the Holy One of Israel. Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest. And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred, four score and five thousand. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Ninevah. And it came to pass ; as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword." Such was the punishment which God inflicted on a blasphemer. These things were written for our warning. And if blasphemy was such an heinous crime in a Heathen or a Jew, how much more so must it be in one who lives under the light of the gospel ? Although such persons may, and perhaps frequently do, escape the punishment of men, yet God will not hold them guiltless. And although he may suffer them to go on without punishment in this life, yet without deep repentance, his judgments will fall heavily upon them in the world to come.— And we have known instances, in our own day, wherein blasphemers have been most signally visited with judgments in this life. Many of my hearers will probably recollect, of reading well authenticated accounts of persons being struck instantly dead in the very act of blaspheming God. Blasphemy is a crime which ought to be severely punished by the civil authority ; for apart from the consideration that it is the duty of civil society to see that the name of God is regarded, a blasphemer is a dangerous member of society. One who can be guilty of this sin must be so depraved and hardened in sin as to be prepared for any excess in crime. Our laws make blasphemy a crime against the State, punishable by fine and imprisonment. In some countries this crime is punished much more severely than with us; and in some it is punished with death. And without repentance, which probably very rarely indeed takes place in such hardened wretches, it will be punished with eternal death in the world to come, by that God who is jealous for the glory of his name,

and who will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

II. We proceed to shew how this commandment may be broken in reference to the ordinances of God. These, as has been shown, are included in his name in the third commandment; and therefore we break this commandment by profaning or abusing the divine ordinances.

1. This commandment requires that we use the ordinances of divine appointment. They therefore who neglect to pray, to read and to hear the word of God, to attend upon public worship, and to come to the sacraments, are chargeable, by this commandment, with sins of omission.

2. They who do attend upon any or all of these ordinances, but attend upon them in an irreverent manner, are guilty of a breach of this commandment. Hence they who rush thoughtlessly and carelessly to the ordinances of God, without endeavouring to fix their thoughts, and to gain an impression of the holiness and majesty of that God into whose presence they are going, violate this commandment. They again, who while attending upon divine ordinances, are guilty of whispering and smiling, or any such indecent gestures, are guilty of a want of due reverence to God, and are breakers of this commandment.— And that disgraceful practice, of *sleeping* in the time of public worship, is an indecency offered to God, which is in a high degree irreverent, and is a sin against the third commandment.

3. Formality in the use of divine ordinances is a breach of this commandment. A reverence of heart is necessary to acceptable worship. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit, and in truth" John iv. 24.

4. A hypocritical profession of religion, and attendance upon divine ordinances, with a view to impose upon men. and further some selfish ends, is a heinous violation of this commandment. It is a using God's name insincerely, a mocking him, and a taking his name in vain. Hypocrisy is a great sin, and one against which the wrath of God is denounced in his word. "The hypocrites in heart heap up wrath." Job. xxxvi. 13. "Fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites." Is. xxxiii. 14. "The hypocrites hope shall perish." Job viii. 13.

III. This commandment refers also to the word of God, and is broken by profaning or abusing this. In reference to the word of God, this commandment is violated,

1. By a neglect to read, hear, and become acquainted with it; and by a careless, indifferent, and irreverent reading or hearing of it, without an impression of the importance of the truths therein taught, and a reverence of that God who manifests himself in and by these truths.

2. It is broken by a denial of the truth of his word. This is very dishonouring to God; for it is giving him the lie, when he has declared such and such things to be true, and men say, they are not true; as the apostle John hath said, 1. John v. 10. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." And what profaneness is this, to make that God who is unchangeably true, a liar! With this profaneness is the Deist chargeable; and surely God will not hold him guiltless.

3. This commandment is broken, still more heinously by those who not only deny the truth of God's word; but also make it the subject of ridicule. This is a very high degree of profaneness. Of this kind of profaneness we have many instances in the writings of the blasphemous Paine. And doubtless many of his admirers, who have retailed his misrepresentations, absurdities, and blasphemies, have in this respect followed in his steps. Dreadful indeed must be the doom which awaits those, who can thus, not only give the great and tremendous God the lie, but who can also make his truth the subject of their ridicule!

4. This commandment is broken by using the word of God in a jocose or merry way, to gratify a propensity to wit, and set off discourse for the entertainment of company. Such a use of the word of God is a very common practice, not only among despisers and scoffers, and the openly profane; but also among those who profess to believe and appear to respect the Scriptures; and especially by those who have a natural propensity to wit. But such conduct is certainly sinful, and a breach of the third commandment. The word of God is too sacred ever to be used in this way. And whenever we indulge ourselves in such a use of it, our conduct is displeasing to God.

IV. God maketh himself known by his works. His

name is imprinted upon them and is taught by them—they teach his perfections and shew forth his glory.

In reference to the works of God, the third commandment is broken, by denying that he created the world; or allowing that he created the world, by denying his providence, or that he upholds and governs the world which he has made; or allowing his providence in general, by denying it in application to particulars, in direct opposition to his word; by ascribing events, as many do, to chance, fortune, or fate, instead of the providence of God; by a forgetfulness of God, and unthankfulness for his goodness in prosperity; and by murmuring at, and quarrelling with his dispensations under afflictions.

And here it will be proper to consider the subject of *lots* and shew how this commandment may be broken by the use of them. A lot is an appeal to the providence of God to decide for us in a doubtful case. This was once a religious ordinance proper to be used on certain occasions. Whether it be proper now, in any case, to use the lot as a religious ordinance, is at least a doubtful matter; for it is doubtful whether in any instance, recorded in the Scriptures, the lot was properly used, without the direction of God, authorizing it in that particular case. The canon of Scripture is now complete; and it is a sufficient rule to guide us in the path of duty; and is intended to be the rule of duty. Therefore to admit the necessity in certain cases of leaving the word of God, and making an immediate appeal to God himself to point out what is right, in an extraordinary way, appears to be a disparagement of Scripture, and in opposition to the truth, that it is a perfect rule of faith and practice. Besides, when a decision has been made by the lot, have we any warrant in Scripture, that such decision does certainly point out the path of duty? I can find none. And if we have none, we would be really as much in the dark as to duty, after casting the lot as before. For these reasons, I am inclined to the opinion, that the use of the lot in any case to decide the path of duty, is wrong.

And here another question occurs; is the use of the lot in any case proper? If we may not now have recourse to it as a religious ordinance, may we not use it in civil affairs, or in the common affairs of life? On this question casuists differ. Every casting of the lot is an

implicit appeal to the providence of God. It is not decided by chance; for there is no such thing in the world. The sentiment, however it may be held, is highly atheistical. The believer in revelation cannot doubt that the providence of God is conversant about the smallest events, when he reads, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.—But the very hairs of your head are all numbered," Mat. x. 29, 30. Nor can he doubt that the providence of God disposes of the lot when he reads, "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord," Prov. xvi. 33. This being the case, it appears to be the natural conclusion, that the lot, whenever used, ought to be used religiously, or with a reverence of that God to whose decision an appeal is made. And whether we have any right at present, to make such an appeal in any case, and therefore whether in any case it is right to use the lot, is at least a doubtful matter. I can only, with deference, and not without doubts, express an opinion, that it is not.

That every lot is an implicit appeal to providence, which ought not to be made, at least on every trivial occasion, and never but with reverence, is one principle on which lotteries, and all games of chance, as they are called, are condemned. They are condemned also for many other reasons; but this is not the place to consider these reasons.

And while upon the subject of lots, I would here further observe, that the lot is sometimes used by serious people in a way which is unquestionably wrong. I mean by opening the Bible at random, and seizing the passage which first meets the eye as a message from God applicable to their particular state. This is a most absurd practice. It is one of the devices of Satan, by which he imposes on weak minds; and it is a tempting God, and making an appeal to him where there is no warrant for it in his word. And we have doubtless reason to believe that God in judgment sometimes leaves such persons to be carried away by these false delusions to believe a lie.

From a review of this subject and comparing ourselves with it we have doubtless all reason to acknowledge that we have often broken the third commandment, in many

ways. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Come let us view ourselves in the glass of God's law, and see that we are sinners, and great sinners. And while we acknowledge and feel that we have often sinned against this commandment, let us remember that it is written, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10.

The law condemns us. Let us under a sense of our sins, and the condemnation of the law which we have violated, cry with the publican, God be merciful to us sinners; and flee for pardon and acceptance to that Redeemer who hath opened a way of redemption from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; and who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; and take refuge in his atoneing blood and justifying righteousness. Let us learn also from this subject to be more careful in future, to use with reverence every thing by which God maketh himself known. And to deter us from a breach of this commandment, let us always keep in mind the awful sanction with which it is enforced, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain."

SERMON LXVI.

PROFANE SWEARING.

MATTHEW V. 34. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*But I say unto you, swear not at all.*"

This text does not forbid the taking of an oath, in civil or ecclesiastical matters, when duly called to it by proper authority. The lawfulness of such oaths is clearly evident from both the old and the New-Testaments. But it forbids swearing, by the name of God, in common conversation; and also swearing, on any occasion, by any creature, as heaven, the earth, Jerusalem, our head, and the like.

The Jews, while they held that the oaths which they made in the name of the Lord were binding, and that they could not break such oaths without sin, supposed they might swear by other things, and break their oaths and yet be innocent. In reference to this sentiment, our Saviour gave the prohibition, "Swear not at all," in which he condemned all kinds of swearing in common conversation, whether by the name of God or any thing else. And further he directed, that in our communications with each other we should use simple affirmation or denial.—"Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to offer some reasons to enforce the prohibition in the text; or in other words to dissuade from the vice of *profane swearing*. This is a sin against the third commandment. By profane swearing, as the phrase will be used in the ensuing discourse, we are to understand, appealing to God, for the truth of the assertions we make in common conversation; using any of the names of God, or any of the persons of the Trinity, in common conversation, in a light or irreverent manner; swearing on any occasion by any creature whatever, as heaven, soul, &c.; and also imprecating curses on ourselves or others.

Many weighty reasons may be offered to dissuade from this vice.

1. It is *inexcusable*. There is less temptation to this than perhaps any other vice. To some vices there may be a constitutional propensity. But as one well observes, "No man is born with a swearing constitution." In other vices a temporary qualification may be enjoyed, or some temporal advantage may be derived from them. The drunkard and the debauchee are prompted to the commission of their respective crimes by their sensual appetites, and they receive a momentary gratification. The liar may cover a crime, and thus screen himself from punishment, or he may do himself or his friends a temporary good. The dishonest man may gratify his avarice, and increase his estate. But what tempts the swearer to utter his oaths and curses? what enjoyment has he in them! or what advantage can he reap from them. What excuse can be given to palliate this vice? Certainly it ought to be something very weighty to induce persons thus to trifle with the tremendous name of God.

Will persons say that they cannot gain credit to what they assert without the addition of an oath? But will these persons be willing to allow that their credit for veracity is so low, that their simple word in common conversation will not be taken? and supposing that they are so lost to a sense of character as to allow this; do they gain any more credit for what they say, because they confirm it, in an irreverent manner, with an oath? Will a man be believed by another the sooner, because he shows that he has no fear of God before his eyes; No! reason teaches us that there is less credit due to his assertions; for what has he then to restrain him, but the fear of man? And if he can cast this off too, what security can we have for his veracity? and facts prove that a profane swearer gains no additional credit to his assertions, in common conversation, by confirming them with an oath.

Will the profane swearer plead passion as an excuse for his oaths and curses? But one sin will not form a just excuse for another; and the indulgence of angry and revengeful passions is itself highly sinful. But supposing such indulgence was lawful, it is certainly irrational, to vent passion by taking the name of God in vain, and thus dishonouring him and breaking his commandments. It is certainly highly irrational that when our fellow creatures provoke us, we should as a satisfaction abuse God and provoke him. Besides such conduct does not afford satisfaction. It does not repair the injury our enemy has done us; nor does it in the least injure him. This is such an irrational plea to justify profane swearing, that it is astonishing it has ever been given by any person in his senses.

Again, will the profane swearer plead as an excuse for this practice that it is a fashionable accomplishment, and a mark of bravery and gentility? Supposing this were the fact, could the fashions and opinions of a wicked world, justify dishonouring God, and transgressing his laws? are the wicked to be respected rather than God? Certainly not. But is it a fact that profaneness is any proof either of bravery or gentility? Reason certainly teaches us that it is no mark of bravery, but that it is a proof of great presumption and consummate folly, thus to tempt the vengeance, and set at defiance the power of him, before whom even devils tremble, whom all created

powers cannot resist or controul, and who is able with a word to sink all his creatures into non-existence, or into eternal perdition. It certainly can be no proof of bravery to rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler and tempt his vengeance. And it is no more an evidence of gentility than of bravery. It is, alas! too true, that many who call themselves gentlemen, are addicted to this vice, though I hope and believe the number has considerably lessened. But if they have any just claims to the character of gentlemen, this practice makes no part of their claims; for what constitutes the character of the true gentleman, but the virtues which in a superior degree adorn his character? If profane swearing, formed a trait of gentility, the very vilest characters in the very lowest ranks of society, would, as far as this trait was concerned, have the fairest claim to the character of gentlemen. For we do find that the most infamous, the lowest characters, the very refuse of society, who pretend to no character, and who care for none, are for the most part as great adepts, in this genteel accomplishment, as it is termed by some, as those who pride themselves on their gentility. This consideration ought to be sufficient, to lead all, who have any regard to dignity of character, and who would not wish to put themselves on a level with the very lowest characters in society, to avoid and detest this practice.

Again will the profane swearer offer as an excuse for this practice, that he does it without reflection, and that he does not mean any thing when he swears? Then he acknowledges that he acts without meaning and therefore without reason. And can this excuse a rational creature? is it not rather a disgrace to him?

Will he say again, that he has become so addicted to this practice, that he knows not when he does it? This, instead of extenuating, aggravates his guilt. For it shows that he has so long indulged himself in this vice, that he has formed a habit so powerful as to be almost invincible. To admit the validity of this excuse, would be to allow that the longer a person has continued in any sin, and the more bent upon wickedness he becomes, the more excusable he is. The vice of profane swearing is inexcusable.

2. Another reason to dissuade from this vice is this—

unless it is forsaken by true repentance, and the guilt of it is washed away by the blood of Christ, it will unavoidably bring down the judgments of God upon the head of him who indulges himself in it, and will inevitably issue in his *eternal destruction* where he will forever feel the power of that God, with whose name, and laws he has trifled, and the awful import of damnation with which he has sported. God is jealous for the glory of his name, and he has commanded us to reverence him; and will he not punish for such violations of the reverence which is due to him? Besides, has the profane swearer a right to expect any thing else? for has he not often called God to witness to a falsehood, and sworn by his name, and then broken his oath? An oath is an appeal to God as the searcher of hearts, for the truth of what we say, and an imprecation of his curse in case we swear falsely. Let the profane swearer therefore consider, whether in the numerous oaths which he has made in conversation, he has never called God to witness to a falsehood. And if so, has he any reason to expect any thing else, than that the wrath and curse of God, under which he has voluntarily put himself by his oaths, will fall upon him? Besides are there not some wretches, who, (shocking to relate!) have called upon God to damn their souls? And can such persons expect any thing else, than that they will have what they have asked?

But if, notwithstanding these reasons, any doubt could remain, as to the dreadful doom which awaits the swearer; the Scriptures have settled this point, and removed every ground of doubt. The third precept of the decalogue, which was delivered with awful majesty and terror by God himself, is, "thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Or in other words he will punish those who take his name in vain. Such a threatening as this is not to be found annexed to any other of the ten commandments, which may intimate that this is a sin peculiarly offensive to God. Again we read Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law—that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful." And James exhorts, James v. 12. "Above all things, my brethren, swear not;

neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. And in Jude, vers. 14, 15. we read, "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." From these texts the profane swearer may learn his doom. The Lord will not hold him guiltless; he will make his plagues wonderful; he shall fall into condemnation; and the Lord will execute judgment upon him for his hard speeches which he has spoken against him.—The wrath and curse of that Almighty God, with whose holy name he has dared to trifle, abideth upon him. That damnation which he has often imprecated upon himself and others, will without speedy repentance be his eternal portion; and then will he find that the wrath of God which he now dares to tempt is terrible; and that damnation is a word of most dreadful import.

3. The practice of profane swearing, has a tendency, *injurious* to the happiness of *others*. The evil does not end with the destruction of the swearer himself, but it injures others, and may destroy many.

The feelings of the pious are often greatly wounded, by hearing that holy name, which they reverence and love profaned by unhallowed lips. Perhaps no one of the prevalent vices which a good man is compelled to witness fills him with more horror and pain, than this of profane swearing. If then the swearer has no regard to God or his own soul; yet if he has any respect to common decency and politeness, this ought to restrain him from this vice, especially in the presence of those to whom it is so odious and painful.

And not only are the feelings of the pious wounded by this practice; but the eternal interests of those who are not pious are endangered. The example of the swearer may be followed by others, and thus their souls be destroyed. The young especially are in danger from this source. They are peculiarly prone to imitation, and especially to imitate vice. And that they are prone to imitate this vice we have constant evidence among the youth in our streets, where we frequently hear those who

have but lately begun to speak, using profane language. Where have they learned this practice, but from hearing older persons, use such language? And what will be to these children and youth the consequence of this vice, which they have learned from older sinners? Undoubtedly we have great reason to fear, the consequence will be, the loss of their souls. For while the vice itself, brings him who commits it under the condemning sentence of God's law, it hardens the heart against serious impressions, and prepares the way for the commission of other sins. Perhaps no vice has a more direct tendency to destroy a reverence for God, and to lead a person to cast off his fear than this. And when a person ceases to have a reverence for God, and has no fear of him before his eyes, he is prepared for the commission of any crime. If therefore profane swearers have any respect for the happiness of others, and especially of the rising generation, who are in great danger of being eternally ruined by their example, let them forsake this vice; and especially they ought to be extremely careful, and not vent their oaths and curses in the presence of those who are in danger of becoming contaminated by them

If the profane swearer be the head of a family, evil consequences are more especially likely to ensue to those under his care. For to him his children look up for example, and when an example of profane language is set before them we have every reason to expect that the children will walk in the same steps. And are there not some such parents, who never pronounce the name of God in the presence of their children, but in a profane manner; and who instead of teaching their children to fear God, teach them by their example at least, if not by precept, to cast off his fear, and profane his holy name; and thus take the direct course to draw down his curse upon their heads? Unnatural parents! Where is that desire for your children's happiness, which God has implanted in the human breast? You are murdering your children, in the most dreadful sense,—you are ruining their souls. Happy would it be for your children, if the Lord were to take them away from you before they come to an age to imitate your example. If they live to be brought up under your instructions and example, the probability is that you will meet them hereafter in hell. And how

will this aggravate your misery through eternity! The Lord in his word not only threatens to make the plagues of the man who fears not his name wonderful; but also the plagues of his seed. As we read Deut. xxviii. 58, 59.—"If thou will not observe to do all the words of this law—that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God; then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy *seed*." And further, the curse of God abideth not only upon the profane swearer himself, but also upon his house, as we learn from Zech. v. 1, 3, 4. "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that *sweareth* shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief and into the house of him that *sweareth falsely* by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house."—Let the heads of families who may be guilty of this vice seriously ponder on these texts.

Again this vice has a most pernicious influence on the interests of society at large, not only by the general corruption of manners which it promotes; but especially by the influence which it has in lessening the fear and solemnity of an oath, when administered by lawful authority. Perjury, or swearing falsely when called by civil authority to take an oath, is one of the greatest of crimes against society; as hereby the character, the property, and the lives of the innocent may be destroyed. The fear of God is the grand security against perjury. This is clearly implied in the circumstance, that legislators have required an appeal to be made to God as the searcher of hearts in taking an oath. Whatever therefore tends to destroy or lessen the fear of God increases the danger of perjury. And therefore profane swearing is a broad inlet to perjury. That man who has so far cast off the fear of God, as to take his holy name in vain in common conversation, or to call him to witness the truth of an assertion, known by the assertor to be doubtful, or even false, or to witness his sincerity in making a promise, which he is not careful to fulfil, and which he does not intend to fulfil, as is most frequently the case with profane swearers, will

not probably feel the solemnity of an oath when he is called to take one in a court of justice. It is true a sense of honour, regard to the opinions of the world, and fear of the penalty of human laws may elicit the truth; but as far as the fear of God forms any check against perjury, the check must be greatly weakened, if not entirely destroyed. And this as was observed before forms the grand check and security against perjury.—When therefore the inclination of a profane swearer, prompts him to take a false oath; and he has no reason to fear detection and punishment by men, what have we not to apprehend from such a man? Sound reason unquestionably teaches us, that profane swearing tends to lessen the solemnity of an oath; and hence by a necessary consequence, security against perjury. Therefore the vice of profane swearing, is most dangerous to the interests of civil society. From this pernicious influence of profane swearing on the interests of the community, we may see the force of that saying of the prophet Jeremiah (xxiii. 10,) "Because of swearing the land mourneth."

From this subject, we may now

1. Infer the total depravity of human nature. For surely that nature must be totally depraved, which can without reason, honour, profit, or real pleasure, thus trifle with the name of that God, before whom angels veil their faces; thus dishonour him who made them, who preserves them in being, and who is the author of all their blessings; and thus tempt the vengeance, and brave the power of him who holds their lives, and eternal destinies in his hands; whose power is almighty; and before whose dreadful wrath none can stand. I doubt, my hearers, whether the infernal regions can produce such beings as we find on earth, who can tempt the vengeance of God and sport with damnation. For the inhabitants of hell feel the divine vengeance, and know by experience the import of damnation. Devils believe and tremble; and we find them in the days when Christ was upon earth, begging not to be tormented before the time: but men will imprecate damnation upon themselves. "Herein (as one speaks) they seem to envy the happiness of devils and damned wretches in hell, and endeavour to snatch damnation out of God's hands before the time; as if they could not be soon enough among their roaring and how-

ling companions, in the midst of the everlasting burnings." Surely brethren the nature must be totally depraved which is capable of such excess.

2. This subject may well lead us to admire the patience of God, that he bears with such indignities; and does not speedily arrest the profane swearer in the midst of his oaths and imprecations; and summon him to his bar to render an account. And this very patience the swearer improves to greater audacity, as though he was resolved to try how far the patience of God would extend, and what load of wickedness it was capable of bearing. But let such sinners be assured that the vengeance of God slumbereth not. He will not hold them guiltless. Despising the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, after their hardness and impenitent hearts, they are treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Soon will his anger flame against them and burn to the lowest hell.

3. Let me affectionately and earnestly exhort and warn those who are not addicted to this vice, and especially the young who are most in danger, carefully to guard against it. Shun every temptation to it; and especially shun the society of those who take God's name in vain.—And ever think and speak reverently of God. My dear young friends listen to these counsels. For your interests are most intimately connected with them.

And let those who abhor this vice endeavour to correct it in others by showing their disapprobation of it when they hear it—Let them prudently and affectionately counsel and reprove others when they are profane in their presence. Much might be done in this way to check this vice. If every person who disapproves of this vice were to reprove when they hear it, it would soon shrink from public observation. The conscience of the swearer is on the side of the reprover. Let all therefore who disapprove of this vice, whether they profess religion or not, be faithful, when they hear profane language, and show their disapprobation; and much will be done to check its progress and prevent its demoralizing effects.

4. Finally let those of my hearers who are addicted to this vice, reflect on their conduct; and their own reason and conscience must convince them that they are

wrong. Let me beseech you to reflect on the reasons which have been offered to dissuade from this vice. It is inexcusable, destructive to your own souls, and injurious to the interests of others. Notwithstanding your great wickedness against God, he is pleased still to prolong the day of his patience towards you. Improve this day.—There may be still mercy for you. Break off from this sin, repent of it, and take refuge in the atoning blood of Christ from the wrath of God which threatens you. Have pity on the land, which has mourned because of swearing. Have pity on the rising generation, whom you are injuring and destroying by your example. Have pity on your own souls, which must soon stand at the bar of God, and give an account of the deeds done in the body. And let your tongue which has hitherto been your shame; be hereafter your glory.—AMEN.

SERMON LXVII.

PERJURY.

LEVITICUS XIX. 12. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*And ye shall not swear by my name falsely.*"

The sin, forbidden in this text, is included in the third commandment, and is one of the principal sins intended by taking the name of the Lord in vain. The prohibition, "ye shall not swear by my name falsely," implies that it is our duty, on certain occasions, to swear by the name of the Lord. An oath, as was observed, in a former discourse, is either assertory or promissory. An assertory oath relates to evidence, and is a solemn appeal to God as an omniscient Judge for the truth of what we say; and implies an imprecation of his wrath, in case we speak falsely. A promissory oath respects things to be performed, and is a solemn appeal to God, as the searcher

of hearts for the sincerity of what we promise, and an imprecation of his wrath, in case we do not perform.

Swearing falsely, or *perjury*, is the violation of an oath. In an assertory oath, in which we swear, that we will tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; if we knowingly declare falsehood instead of truth; or if while we tell nothing but truth, we wilfully keep back a part which has a bearing on the case in which we are called to give testimony, we are guilty of perjury. In a promissory oath, perjury is committed when the thing promised under oath is not performed. We must however here except, when the thing promised is impossible to be performed; or when the condition on which the thing is promissed is not fulfilled; or when the person to whom the benefit is promised, releases the promiser from his obligation; or when the promiser, at the time of making the oath, was not in the full exercise of his reason; or when the thing promised to be done is unlawful. But, except in these cases, if we do not perform what we have promised under oath, we are guilty of perjury.

The crime of perjury, we have reason to fear is very prevalent in our country. And it is a very great crime; and though it frequently escapes the punishment of men, yet will not the Lord suffer it to escape his righteous judgment.

Let us point out the evils, and inquire into the causes of this crime.

I. The *evils* of perjury. These are many and great. They may be summed up in the injury it may do to society, and to the soul of the individual guilty of it.

1. It is a crime highly dangerous to the interests of society. By perjury, the innocent may be deprived of their character, property, and lives. As judgment is pronounced in court according to testimony given under oath, if such testimony be false, or contain not the whole truth, the judgment founded on it may be contrary to right; and thus the innocent may be condemned, while the guilty may be acquitted. This is the direct consequence of false swearing; and we have reason to fear that this is a consequence which has often been realized. Perjury therefore must be a crime highly dangerous to the interests of society; and for this reason, it ought to be held in

abhorrence by all good citizens and to be severely punished by the civil magistrate.

In ancient times, perjury was in some places punished with death; in others the person convicted of this crime was liable to the punishment due to the crime, of which his testimony went to convict the innocent; and in others a pecuniary fine was imposed. By the English laws, the punishment of perjury anciently was death; afterwards it came to be banishment, or cutting out the tongue; then forfeiture of goods; and laterly it has been fine and imprisonment, together with disqualification ever after to bear testimony. In the State in which we live, the penalty for perjury is fine and imprisonment; and the perjured person is rendered incapable after conviction of giving testimony. These remarks show the sense which legislators in different countries and ages have had of the crime of perjury, and that in their estimation, it is a crime very injurious to society.

2. This is a crime which is ruinous to the soul, and exposes the individual guilty of it to the wrath of God.—Even the Heathen, who were guided by the light of nature, thus viewed this crime. We are told it was a general sentiment, that though this crime escaped human punishments, yet the divine vengeance would certainly overtake those guilty of it; and even inanimate nature was supposed to take revenge for it. "No man (said Aristotle) will perjure himself, who apprehends vengeance from heaven, and disgrace among men." And Cicero said, "the divine punishment of perjury is destruction, the human, disgrace." Thus the Heathen viewed the crime of perjury. And

In what light is it viewed in the word of God? It is there condemned, and those guilty of it are severely threatened. In our text and elsewhere God has expressly forbidden this sin; and he will not suffer his commandments to be broken with impunity. In the third commandment we read, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." This awful declaration undoubtedly applies to the perjured; for perjury is certainly one of the sins, and I suppose the principal sin intended in this commandment. Jer. vii. 9. Swearing falsely is mentioned as one of the sins of the Jews, for which the Lord was about to bring upon them, those tremendous

judgments which they soon after experienced. And Zech. v. 1, 3, 4. We find an awful curse resting upon the false swearer and his house. "Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.—This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side, according to it. I will bring it forth saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that *sweareth falsely* by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house." And the nation of Israel was severely punished, because Saul their king brake the oath which their fathers had sworn to the Gibeonites; and the wrath of God was revealed against king Zedekiah because he perjured himself.

From these passages, it is clearly evident that perjury is a very heinous sin in the sight of God, and one which, without deep repentance, he will most severely punish.

Besides, the nature of perjury teaches us the same. It is a practical denial of the divine omniscience; for an oath is an appeal to God as every where present; but the language of the false swearer is, God doth not see me. Or if the false swearer does not deny the omniscience of God, he practically denies the divine justice or the will of God to punish iniquity; or else the divine power or ability to punish; for what is the practical language of perjury, but either that God will not punish sin, and therefore is not just; or else that he cannot punish and therefore is not almighty in power, and is unworthy of being feared by his creatures? and will not God punish for such indignities cast upon himself? Further, the false swearer uses the name of God to gain credit to his falsehoods, pervert justice, and oppress the innocent. And certainly an infinitely righteous God will not suffer his name to be thus used with impunity.

Besides the false swearer has voluntarily put himself under the curse of God. In taking the oath which he has violated, he expressed a willingness that God should deal with him according as he kept his oath or not; for the imprecation of God's wrath, in case of perjury, is either expressed or implied in every oath as its sanction.—

And after this, can a person expect any thing else, if he swear falsely, but the execution of that curse which he has imprecated?

From all that has been said, we conclude that perjury is a sin very dangerous to society, and exceedingly displeasing to God; and a sin which renders the person guilty of it, worthy of the abhorrence and punishment of men, and exposes him to the dreadful judgments of God, which without repentance will assuredly fall upon him.

We proceed as was proposed,

II. To inquire into some of the causes of this sin.

The great cause is the corruption of the human heart, which weakens and destroys the fear of God; and whatever has a tendency to increase this corruption, and lessen a reverence for God, and banish his fear, increases the liability to perjury. But there are some causes which have a more direct influence.

1. The frequency of oaths is probably one great cause of perjury. Oaths are so multiplied that they are required frequently to be taken on very trivial occasions. This undoubtedly has a tendency to lessen the solemnity of an oath; for by means of the frequency of oaths, we have reason to fear they are often considered as a mere legal formality. Even the Heathen thought, that the frequency of oaths, would increase the danger of perjury. For we are told that the ancient philosophers were so afraid of perjury, that an oath before a judge was never admitted, but for want of other proof. Plato's precept was, "not to administer an oath wantonly, but on deep grounds and with the strictest caution." And Clinias, another Heathen, was so very scrupulous, that rather than take an oath (though lawful) he suffered the loss of three talents:

2. Another cause of perjury is the manner in which oaths are often administered. To impress the minds of those who take an oath with a fear of perjury, it ought to be administed in a solemn manner. But it is doubtless a fact that oaths are frequently administered with little or no solemnity. This want of solemnity in the administration of oaths, is undoubtedly one cause of perjury; and men would less frequently commit this crime, if oaths were always administered to them in a manner calculated to make them feel their solemnity, and fill them with a fear of the God whom they call to witness.

3. Another, and a principal cause of perjury is the common practice of profane swearing. This in itself is an exceedingly wicked practice, and it is rendered more so by the consequences to which it naturally leads ; and this is one of its evil consequences. For swearing in common conversation, doubtless has a tendency to lessen and destroy the fear of God in the person who practices this vice. But whatever tends to lessen the fear of God, undoubtedly, tends to lessen security against perjury. For the fear of God is the grand security against this vice.— Otherwise, why does the law require an oath, or an appeal to be made to God ? It is true, the fear of God is intended to be strengthened by the penalties of human laws. But if human penalties were the only, or the chief security, against perjury, simple affirmation, or denial, or promises, would answer every purpose of an oath. The fear of God is the great security against perjury ; and whatever therefore tends to lessen or destroy this fear, must tend to open a door to perjury. But profane swearing, undoubtedly tends to lessen and destroy the fear of God.— He that can without remorse trifle with the tremendous name of God, and take it in vain in common conversation, can certainly have little or no fear of God before his eyes. And can we suppose that he who can break, without remorse, the oaths which he makes in common conversation, will have the fear of God before his eyes to restrain him from perjury, when under an oath administered by lawful authority ? The fear of man, or a sense of honour may be some security ; but when the passions of such an one, or his worldly interest, or the interests of his friends prompt him to perjury, and he is in no danger of detection and punishment by human laws, we have no reason to suppose that the fear of God will prevent him; when he manifests by his oaths, which he makes and breaks in common conversation, almost every day, that he has no fear of God before his eyes.

4. Another cause of perjury may be, that those who commit this crime, are seldom brought to punishment. This may arise from two causes, viz. the difficulty of convicting a false swearer, and the remissness of men to endeavour to bring such to justice.

5. I mention one other cause of perjury, and that is, a disregard to truth in common conversation. A man who

is addicted to lying in the ordinary occurrences of life, will certainly have a much stronger propensity to withhold the truth, or speak untruth, when under oath, and thus perjure himself, than one who has a strict regard to veracity in common conversation.

In view of this subject, let us seriously consider the evils of perjury to society, and how much it provokes the wrath of God; and let us as we regard the welfare of society and the favour of God, most sacredly and strictly keep our oaths. When called to bear testimony under oath, let us always feel a fear of that God whom we have called to witness; and remembering that his eye is upon us, let us speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. And when we are about to promise under oath to perform any duty, let us well consider what we are about to engage, and when we have sworn let us sacredly adhere to what we have engaged to do. And let those especially who take oaths of office, which are promissory oaths, study well what they promise and what they call God to witness they will perform. And unless they intend at all hazards, sacredly and strictly to perform the duties, they had far better relinquish their offices than risk the awful wrath of God which awaits the perjured. Let not ease or popularity or any other consideration outweigh their regard to their oath. If they do, let them remember, that although they may escape punishment from men, there is a day of judgment coming, when the Lord will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain. And this brethren, permit me to say, we have reason to fear will be an awful day to many persons, who have taken and violated oaths of office.

And if there be any present who are guilty in the sight of God of having ever violated their oaths, either by speaking, when under oath, any thing but the truth, or keeping back part of the truth; or by not performing all that they promised under oath they would perform; let them be sensible that they are guilty of a very great crime; and although their character may stand fair before men, let them remember they must soon stand at the bar of a righteous Judge, whom they have called to witness, and who will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. But notwithstanding the sin of perjury is very heinous; yet if even the perjured will truly repent they shall

find mercy. For the penitent shall find mercy, though their sins have been as scarlet and of a crimson die. If then any such atrocious sinners are present, let them repent without delay, and flee by faith to the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin.

And since perjury is a vice so dangerous to the interests of society, and so much exposes to the wrath of God, let all who love their country, and who regard the favour of God, be exhorted to guard against those causes which may lead to this sin in themselves, and as much as in them lies to prevent their influence on others. Live in the fear of God, and pursue those courses which may cherish this fear, and avoid those which may tend to lessen or destroy it. Let those who administer oaths do it with solemnity. Let a sacred regard to truth ever be maintained in the common occurrences of life. Let those who are addicted to the heart hardening sin of profane swearing, break off from it; and let all guard against it, shun it, frown upon it, and endeavour to suppress it in others, as one of the greatest causes of perjury, and the bane of society; and let us never overlook or connive at perjury in others, when we have reason to believe they have been guilty of it; but according to our station and opportunity endeavour to bring them to justice, as dangerous members of society.

We have now, brethren, in a series of discourses attended to the duties required and the sins forbidden in the third commandment. It will be proper now to consider the reason annexed to this commandment, the more to enforce obedience to it. The reason we have contained in these words, " for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." Or as our Catechism explain it in answer to the 56th question.

" *What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?*

The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment."

This reason implies that breaches of this commandment often go unpunished by man; and it appears to contain a tacit reproof that it is so much the case. It is true that some of the breaches of this commandment lie out of the reach of human censures; but there are some that do

come within their reach, which are very little regarded or attended to by human authority. And where laws are enacted against certain breaches of this commandment, in most cases, but little regard appears to be paid to the real wickedness of the crime in fixing the penalty; but attention is paid chiefly, if not entirely, to the supposed damage which human society may suffer. And how rarely are some of these laws put in force! For instance, the law forbids profane swearing, and renders the transgressor liable to a pecuniary penalty, but the law is very seldom enforced. And with respect to the other breaches of this commandment forbidden by the laws, the laws are probably but seldom enforced, in comparison with the number of transgressions which occur.

It is too true that the breakers of this commandment, often escape punishment from men; and it is also true, that the Lord will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment. He will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain He searcheth the heart, and knoweth every breach of this commandment. He is a God jealous for the glory of his name. And although his vengeance against the transgressor may seem now to sleep, yet there is a day coming and near at hand when those who have taken his name in vain must stand at his awful bar; and then will be seen the dreadful import of the words, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." This is an awful sanction by which obedience to this commandment is enforced. Let it deeply impress our minds, and lead us always to reverence and fear that holy and fearful name the Lord our God. Let us always use with reverence every thing by which God maketh himself known—his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works. Let us fear ever to use the name, titles or attributes of God in a light, trifling or profane way. Let us shun irreverence, formality, and hypocrisy in the use of his ordinances. Let us guard against neglecting, denying, or scoffing at his word; or denying or profaning or abusing his works. And especially let us guard against the prominent and heinous sins of blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, and perjury. Whenever tempted to any of these sins, let this awful sentence, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," deter us. And let it lead those to break off from their sins,

who are in any way, living in a breach of this commandment; and excite them to endeavour by unfeigned repentance, and a true faith in the atoning blood of the Saviour to escape the execution of this dreadful sentence—

May the Lord ever fill us all with reverence for his holy name.—AMEN.

SERMON LXVIII.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 8, 9, 10, 11.

"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*"

As the first commandment respects the object, the second the means, and the third the manner of worship, so the fourth respects the time. It teaches what portion of time, God has particularly set apart for himself, to be specially employed in his worship, viz. one day in seven; it shows how this day ought to be observed; and it presents reasons to enforce its observance.

We shall in this discourse attend to the following points, viz.

I. When was the Sabbath first instituted?

II. Is it of moral and perpetual obligation?

III. Has the Sabbath been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week?

IV. When does the Sabbath begin.

I. When was the Sabbath first instituted?

We are not to place the first institution of the Sabbath at the time the moral law was given at Sinai, and committed to writing on tables of stone; neither are we to place it, as some would do, at the time the manna was given in the wilderness of Sin, before the Israelites came to Sinai; but we are to place its first institution, immediately after the completion of the works of creation, on the seventh day from the beginning.

This appears from the manner in which the sacred historian speaks of the seventh day in the 2d. chapter of Genesis. After having in the first chapter given an account of of the six days creation, he adds in the beginning of the second chapter, " and he rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made, And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." To *sanctify* signifies to make holy, or to separate any thing to a holy use. And the natural construction of this passage is, that God now set apart the seventh day to a holy use, or sanctified it as a day of holy rest. And accordingly we find in the fourth commandment, that God's resting on the seventh day from the works of creation, is given as the reason of the institution of the Sabbath. " For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed, [or sanctified] it."

The first place in which we find express mention made of the Sabbath is, in the 16th chapter of Exodus, at the time the manna was given in the wilderness of Sin, before the promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai. But the manner in which the Sabbath is there mentioned, evidently shows that it was not then first instituted. Directions were given to prepare for the Sabbath, before any mention of it was made. The Lord after having informed Moses, that he would rain for the children of Israel bread from heaven, and having given directions concerning their daily gathering it, added, " and it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily." Ex. xvi. 5. Here preparation for the Sabbath was required, without a word concerning its institution, and even without mentioning the name. And we do not find the name mentioned until near the close of the chapter, when Moses, the sixth day having come, repeat-

ed the directions which he had given. The whole of what is said in this chapter relative to the Sabbath, teaches that it was instituted before this time.

If it be objected to placing the first institution of the Sabbath as early as the creation, that no mention is made of its observance from that time down to the time of Moses. We may answer, that the sacred historian, previous to his own time is very brief. But although no express mention is made of the Sabbath, yet we have several hints, from which we may collect that the Sabbath was probably observed during this period. In the days of Cain and Abel it is said, Gen. iv. 3,4. "In process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock." A literal translation of the original according to some criticks would be, "in the end of the days, or on the last of the days," that is, probably, on the last day of the week. If this criticism be correct, here was religious worship performed, peculiarly on the seventh day. And why on this day, unless it was observed religiously, or was a Sabbath? In the time of Noah, we know that days, were divided into periods of sevens, or weeks. And why this division, unless it was made for the observance of the Sabbath? In the time of Job, there appears to have been a certain day appointed for the special service of God, when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord. This was probably the Sabbath. Among the Heathen nations, in the earliest ages of which we have any account, we find that time was divided into weeks, and that the seventh day was esteemed sacred. We cannot suppose that the Heathen had this institution from the Jews; for they too much hated and despised them to borrow this custom from them; but we have every reason to suppose that this institution was handed down to them by tradition from their fathers, long before the existence of the Jewish nation; and if this be correct, it is a convincing argument, that the Sabbath was observed in the early ages.

Besides, if we had not the least trace left, from which we might infer that the Sabbath was probably observed from Adam to Moses, it would, by no means certainly follow, that it was not observed; for this is no more than what happens in a period, in which the

history is much more full and particular. We have no mention made of the observance of the Sabbath from the time of Moses to that of David ; but we cannot therefore conclude that during this time it was not observed, or in force.

For the foregoing reasons we conclude that the Sabbath was instituted on the seventh day from the beginning, when God rested from his works, and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. This point is of some moment as it derogates from the dignity and importance of the Sabbath to suppose, that the first ages of the world, for above two thousand years lived without such an institution.

II. The second inquiry proposed to be considered was, is the Sabbath of moral and perpetual obligation ; or was it merely typical and ceremonial, and therefore done away by the coming of Christ ? I answer, the substance of the Sabbath is of moral and perpetual obligation. The dedication of a certain portion of our time, particularly, to the service and worship of God, is in the highest sense moral, and of perpetual obligation. For it is a dictate of nature if there be a God he ought to be worshipped, and that a certain portion of time should be set apart particularly for this purpose. But whether this part should be the sixth, seventh, eighth, or any other portion, the light of nature could not have discovered. This, God hath been pleased to fix by a positive institution, commanding the seventh part to be kept. And this commandment being given, is of perpetual obligation, unless he who gave it, should revoke it and fix another.

That the fourth commandment is of perpetual obligation, and therefore still in force as it respects the dedication of the seventh part of our time particularly to the worship of God, we argue from this consideration, that it was delivered from Mount Sinai, among the other commandments of the decalogue ; and all the others are acknowledged to be of perpetual obligation ; and it was, with the others, written by God, indicating their perpetuity, on tables of stone. But the strongest and most convincing argument in favour of the morality and perpetuity of the Sabbath, may be drawn from the beneficial effects resulting from its observance, and the pernicious consequences which would follow if it were done away. Our Saviour said, " The Sabbath was made for man, and not

man for the Sabbath" Mark ii. 27. Man was made first, and then the Sabbath was instituted for him, or for his good. And hath God ceased to be as benevolent to man as he formerly was? The constitution of man is such that a day of rest from bodily labour, and employment is necessary to refresh and invigorate it. And if it were not for the wise intervention of this day, many covetous persons would soon, by continued labour, impair the vigour of their own constitutions, and especially those of their servants. And we find, given as a reason for the observance of the Sabbath, Deut. v. 14, "That thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou."—The same reason for its observance certainly still continues.

Further it is an undeniable fact, that by means of the Sabbath, virtue is promoted; and virtue is of great importance to the well being of civil society. It is I believe a true observation, that virtue among a people, living under the light of revelation, has prevailed in proportion to the strict observance of the Sabbath; and that on the contrary as the Sabbath has been neglected and violated, the corruption of morals among a people has increased. And has the Sabbath such an important influence on the morals of a people, and therefore on civil and social happiness, and must not the institution be of moral and perpetual obligation?

But there are other and still more important effects which result to mankind from this benevolent institution. Man has an immortal soul. He was not made for this world alone; but he is destined to an eternal existence in a future world. His chief concern therefore lies with eternity. This being the case, it follows, that whatever is calculated to have a favourable influence on his everlasting felicity, is highly beneficial to him. Now that the Sabbath is of peculiar use to prepare man for the future world, there can be no reasonable doubt. By means of the Sabbath the knowledge and the fear of God are signally promoted among men. Many in the lower classes of society can command little or no time, but the Sabbath, to gain religious knowledge, and without this day would in all probability live in ignorance of God and religion and consequently lose eternal happiness; and many in the higher circles, who have time would not take it, were

it not for the salutary restraints of the Sabbath. We who respect and observe the Sabbath, know from experience that the business and amusements of the world, frequently, in the short period of a single week, cause us almost to lose the impressions which the exercises of the Sabbath may have made upon our minds. What then would be the case if we had no Sabbath? We have every reason to believe, we should have no religion among us; and if the Sabbath were forgotten on the earth, we have every reason to believe religion would be unknown. Further the exercises of this day have been and still are accompanied with the peculiar blessing of God to multitudes of individuals. That the preceding remarks on the utility of the Sabbath are correct, I confidently appeal to the judgment of every enlightened, reflecting, and candid person in this assembly. And if correct, they form a convincing proof of the morality of the Sabbath, and the perpetuity of the obligation to observe it. For the Sabbath is as useful now and necessary as it ever was And God is certainly as benevolent as he formerly was. Besides as he forbids will-worship, or religious institutions which he has not commanded, we cannot suppose that he would bless the Sabbath, if the institution were now abolished. But unquestionably, he does in an eminent manner, bless the observance of this day.

From all these considerations we conclude that the Sabbath was not done away by the coming of Christ; but that the institution is still in force, and the obligation to observe it is still binding.

The only objection to the perpetuity of the Sabbath under the christian dispensation, which appears worthy to be noticed here is, one drawn from Col. ii. 16, 17.— "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Christ." The answer which may be given to this objection is, that by the Sabbath days here spoken of, we are to understand, not the weekly Sabbath; but the Jewish festivals which are often called Sabbaths. And that the Apostle did not mean the weekly Sabbath appears from his own practice and that of the churches in his day, observing a weekly Sabbath. Or if he meant the weekly Sabbath, we may

explain it of the seventh day Sabbath, which as we shall presently see was abolished, at the resurrection of Christ, and the first day Sabbath substituted in its place.

We proceed as was proposed,

III. To show that the Sabbath has been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week.

The true doctrine on this point, we have stated in the answer to the 59th question of our Shorter Catechism.

"*Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?*

From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the christian Sabbath."

That at the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week became the Sabbath, and is to be observed as such by christians, may be proved by the following considerations.

We find the primitive disciples, frequently assembled together for religious worship on the first day of the week. We read, John xx. 19. that after the resurrection of Christ and before his ascension, Jesus appeared to his disciples on this day. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them peace be unto you." We read again John xx. 26. "And after eight days," that is according to the Jewish manner of speaking, on the eighth day, including both first days, that is, on the next first day, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, peace be unto you." Here we find the disciples immediately after the resurrection of Christ, twice assembled together on the first day of the week; and we find their Lord particularly selecting this day to appear to them, and speak peace to them, and thus approving of their meeting together on this day.

After the ascension of Christ, we find the disciples assembled together on the day of Pentecost, which was the first day of the week. On this day he sent down the Holy Ghost upon them, and thus again put a peculiar honour on the first day.

Again Acts xx. 7. we read, "upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them ready to depart on the morrow." From this text it appears, that the first day of the week was the usual time of meeting together for religious worship, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. And it is worthy of notice as a further confirmation of this, that Paul had spent at this place seven days, and the day before was the Jewish Sabbath; but we hear of no meeting or preaching on that day.

Again Paul wrote to the Corinthians, 1. Cor. xvi. 1, 2. "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." Here a collection for the poor saints was recommended to be made on every first day of the week. But why on this day, rather than any other, unless it was that the church was then statedly assembled together for religious worship on the christian Sabbath?

From the preceding texts we learn that it was customary for the Apostles and primitive disciples statedly to meet together for religious worship on the first day of the week, and that Christ signally honoured that day, which affords at least a strong presumptive argument, of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Again Rev. i. 10. the first day of the week is called the Lord's day. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." By the Lord's day is evidently meant the first day of the week, so called because Christ the Lord on this day arose from the dead. This is confirmed by the circumstance that the primitive church called the first day of the week the Lord's day. From this text we learn that Christ lays a peculiar claim to the first day of the week as his; which proves that it is to be observed as holy time, and therefore is the christian Sabbath.

In addition to the foregoing proofs drawn from Scripture, we may observe that the first day of the week was kept by the christian church from the earliest times. Ignatius who lived in the beginning of the second century advised every one who loved Christ to celebrate the Lord's

day, which was consecrated to his resurrection; and he calls it the queen and chief of all days. Justin Martyr, who lived in the middle of the second century, hath this sentence in his writings, "on the day which the Heathen call Sunday, all who live in cities or villages meet together in the same place, where the writings of the Apostles and prophets are read," and in the third century we have frequent proof that the christians were distinguished by the character of observers of the Lord's day. The history of the church in the earliest ages of christianity prove that the first day of the week was then observed as the christian Sabbath, which affords an argument that this was the apostolic practice.

Another argument may be drawn from this consideration that God in his providence has owned the first day of the week as the Sabbath, by peculiarly making it a blessing to thousands in their conversion, and comfort.—In addition to all this there seems a great propriety in a change. For the Sabbath was instituted on the seventh day, in commemoration of the completion of the work of creation; but the work of redemption, which was finished on the first day, when Christ arose from the dead, was a still greater work. Besides by observing the first day of the week we commemorate both the great works of creation and redemption—of creation, by keeping one day in seven, and of redemption, by observing the first day of the week.

We proceed to make a few observations on the

IV. Point proposed, viz. when does the Sabbath begin? On this question I shall say but little. Christians differ. *We* begin the Sabbath with the beginning of the civil day, or at midnight. A large and pious portion of the church in our own country begin it in the evening. The reason they give for this is, that the Jews began the Sabbath in the evening by divine direction. Thus we read, Lev. xxiii. 32. "from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath." But to this it is answered, that this law respected a ceremonial Sabbath, or the great day of atonement, which is here called a Sabbath. And although it is probable that the Jewish weekly Sabbath did begin in the evening, yet it is not entirely certain. The following passage has been quoted to prove that it did not, Mat. xxviii. 1. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn

towards the first day of the week"—This text seems to intimate that the end of the Jewish Sabbath, and therefore the beginning, was not in the evening; but towards the dawn.

That the christian Sabbath ought to begin in the morning rather than the evening, may be argued from the following considerations.

1. It appears that the first day of the week at the time of our Saviour's resurrection, began in the morning. This appears from the passage just quoted. Mat. xxviii. 1. "In the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." And also John xx. 19. "the same day (that is the day on which Christ arose) at evening being the first day of the week." From this text it appears that the evening after and not the evening before belonged to the first day.

2. Christ arose early in the morning, and not in the evening, and therefore as we keep the first day of the week, in commemoration of his resurrection, there is a propriety in beginning the Sabbath in the morning.

3. There appears to be a peculiar fitness in beginning the Sabbath in the morning; for by beginning it in the evening, we should either be obliged to lose the afternoon from worldly business, to prepare our minds; or else rush at once from the world to the devotions of the Sabbath. And our devotions would soon be interrupted by the night. And the following evening it would be lawful to engage in worldly avocations, which seems improper immediately after the holy exercises of the day. And especially as but little business can be attended to, in the evening after the Sabbath; many temptations are held out to visiting, and worldly conversation and amusements, which have a great tendency to destroy the seriousness, which may have been produced through the day. For these reasons the morning is preferable to the evening as the time to commence the Sabbath.

And perhaps we may say that in keeping the Sabbath, it is proper to begin and end it at the same time that we begin and end the other days of the week. We ought to keep one whole day in seven, and this ought to be the first day in the reckoning.

SERMON LXIX.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 8, 9, 10, 11.

"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*"

In the last discourse it was shown that the Sabbath was instituted at the creation, that it is of moral and perpetual obligation, and that it has been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week; some observations were made on the time when it begins. We proceed now to consider the duties required, and the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment.

I. The duties required.

"*Questson 58. What is required in the fourth commandment?*

The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word, expressly one whole day in seven to be a holy Sabbath to himself."

The inquiry arises here, whether under the New-Testament dispensation, we are required to keep any set time as holy besides the Sabbath? I answer No. Because God alone has the right of instituting holy time.—Under the Old Testament dispensation he did institute a number of holy days, which made a part of the ceremonial law, which was abrogated by the coming of Christ. But we read of no new days appointed in the New Testament; and therefore we are not bound to observe any.

As to days of fasting and thanksgiving, they are occasionally proper. But no stated seasons or days are to be

observed for these purposes; because none are appointed in the Scriptures. The Scriptures warrant us to set apart a season for special thanksgiving, when we have received special mercies, and a season for special fasting and humiliation when visited with special calamities.—We are therefore to judge when we are called to observe such days, by the aspects of divine providence. But except these occasional days which are to be pointed out by the aspects of divine providence, we are bound to keep no time as holy except one whole day in seven, which is the first day of the week, or the christian Sabbath. This includes not merely an artificial day, extending from the rising to the setting of the sun; but a natural day of twenty four hours, or the one seventh part of a week.

The manner in which this day is to be kept, we have stated in our Catechism in answer to the 60th question.

"*How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?*

The Sabbath is to be sanctified by an holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship; except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.

It is scarcely necessary to mention that the due sanctification of the Sabbath requires us to abstain from things at all times sinful. Breaking of God's commandments is at all times forbidden; but more especially on the Sabbath day. Sin, always wrong, becomes aggravated by being committed on this day. But we are required on this day to abstain, not only from those things which are at all times sinful; but also from those worldly employments and recreations, which are on other days lawful.

1. It is our duty to rest from worldly labour. This is explicitly enjoined in the fourth commandment "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work." Every kind of secular business is to be rested from on this day.

To this general rule there are two exceptions, viz. works of necessity, and works of mercy. Works of necessity are such as refreshing ourselves by food, taking care of beasts, defending ourselves against enemies, extinguishing fires, and attendance of the sick by physicians. These and all other works of real necessity, are lawful on

the Sabbath day. For "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mark ii. 27. And our Saviour by his example sanctioned the performance of works of necessity on the Sabbath day. But it becomes us to be careful that we do not take imaginary, for real necessities, on this day, and thereby incur the displeasure of God.

Works of mercy are also to be excepted; such as saving the life of a beast, visiting the sick, administering to the wants of the distressed, relieving the necessities of the poor, and such like works. For in reference to the Sabbath, our Saviour quoted this text, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Mat. xii. 7. And our Saviour frequently sanctioned the performance of works of mercy, by his own example.

2. It is our duty on this day to rest, not only from worldly labour, but also from those worldly recreations, which may be lawful on other days. It is not a day for worldly pleasures any more than worldly employments. Thus we read Is. LVIII. 13. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure." Here we are required to refrain from doing and finding our own pleasure on the Sabbath day.

3. The rest of the Sabbath is not merely a cessation from worldly labour and recreations; but it is a holy rest, in which we are to be actively engaged in the service of God. The command is, "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it *holy*." And in other places we read, "the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation." Lev. xxiii. 3. "And call the Sabbath a delight the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him." Is. LVIII. 13. It is our duty to "spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy." Preparation should be made the evening before, by a seasonable dispatch of our worldly business, and by endeavouring to compose our minds for the sacred duties of the day, and to get them into a devotional frame. Of this preparation for the Sabbath we have an example in the pious Nehemiah. "And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark, *before the Sabbath*, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged

that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath."—Preparation for the Sabbath the evening before is practised by the most eminently pious christians; and the benefits they receive from the practice afford an argument in favour of the duty. And probably one reason why so many professing christians receive so little benefit from the Sabbath is a neglect, seasonably to dispatch worldly business, and duly to prepare for this holy day.—Hence instead of entering upon the day with a spiritual and lively frame of mind, they enter upon it with languor, and a worldly spirit.

Through the Sabbath we ought to be in a holy frame of mind. Like John, we ought to be in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Rev. i. 10. God requires the heart in all our service. We are to keep the Sabbath holy; but external holiness will not be acceptable, without a corresponding holiness of heart. Having a holy frame of mind, the Sabbath is to be spent in the public, and private exercises of God's worship.

It is our duty to attend, when we have opportunity, on the public worship of God's house. Thus the Sabbath is called "an holy *convocation*." Lev. xxiii. 3. That is a day of solemn assembling together for the worship of God. Isaiah prophesying of the latter day glory of the church, foretold, "and it shall come to pass, that, from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord." Is. LXVI, 23. The example of our Saviour has also taught the duty; for we read, "and he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up; and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day." Luk. iv. 16. When we are not employed in public worship, we ought to be engaged in family and private devotions; such as reading the Scriptures, and other books on religious subjects, meditation on divine things, self-examination, prayer in our families and our closets, catechising and instructing those under our care, and the like. We proceed,

II. To take a cursory view of the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment.

Question 61. "*The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful; or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about worldly employments or recreations.*"

1. The Sabbath is broken, by omitting to perform the duties required. Wherever a duty is commanded, the omission of it is sin. Hence, they who neglect to attend upon public worship, except when necessarily prevented; and they who omit family and private devotion on this day are transgressors of the law respecting the Sabbath.

2. They who externally engage in the duties of the Sabbath but perform them in a careless manner, without a devotional frame of mind, are also transgressors of the fourth commandment. For, "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." John iv. 24. And the Jews of old were severely reproved, and threatened, because they drew near to the Lord with their mouth and honoured him with their lips, while their hearts were removed far from him. Is. xxix. 13.

3. The Sabbath is profaned by spending the day in idleness and sloth. The Sabbath is a day of rest; but it is a holy rest. It is a day of rest from labour; but at the same time a resting in God, or in the performance of those duties of devotion, which are a delightful rest to the holy soul. The word Sabbath signifies rest. And we are told, "there remaineth a rest (or Sabbath) to the people of God," Heb. iv. 9. This rest or Sabbath remaineth in heaven, which will be an eternal rest, or continual Sabbath. But the rest of heaven will not be enjoyed in idleness or sloth. On the contrary the saints there will continually be most actively engaged in the service of God; and will not cease day nor night, praising and serving him. The Sabbath here below is a type of the heavenly rest, and therefore is not to be spent in idleness and sloth. But, alas! it is too often thus spent. Many make it a point to indulge themselves in sleeping much longer on this holy morning, than on any other. This practice is certainly a breach of this commandment, and shows forcibly, where the hearts of such persons are. When they are to engage in the business of the world, they can be up betimes; but when they are called especially to engage in holy exercises, and this too but one day in seven, they will suffer a considerable portion of this small proportion of time to pass away, before they rise from their beds. And many of such persons, after they have risen, spend the greater part of the remainder of the day in idleness and sloth; and the Sabbath is to them a weariness,

saying with some of old, "what a weariness is it?" Mal. i. 13. "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?" Am. viii. 5. How can such persons reasonably expect to be admitted into the holy and active rest, which remaineth for the people of God in heaven? and how would they be happy there, where the Sabbath will never end?

4. The Sabbath is broken by an indulgence in worldly thought and worldly conversation on this day. The law of God is spiritual and extends to the thoughts of the heart as well as to the external actions; and what ever would be wrong if it were acted out, is also wrong in thought, and that it is wrong to indulge ourselves in worldly conversation on the Sabbath, is evident from Is. LVIII. 13. where speaking our own words on this day is condemned. Alas! how often do even professing christians transgress by indulging themselves in worldly conversation on this day.

5. The Sabbath is grossly violated by following worldly business on this day. Worldly labour is expressly prohibited in the commandment itself. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do *any work*." The same is taught in other passages of Scripture in which the pursuit of worldly business is condemned; as in Neh. xiii. 15. "In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath." So also Jer xvii. 21, 22 "Thus saith the Lord, take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do

ye any work ; but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers." Hence it is evident that any kind of worldly employment, except works of necessity and mercy, is a profanation of the Sabbath.

Alas ! in this way, this day is doubtless much profaned. Some on this day especially in a busy season, publicly pursue their worldly occupations ; and others do it more privately. Travelling on business, where necessity does not imperiously compel, sailing of vessels, except over public ferries when cases of necessary travelling occur, and on open seas, the running of stages, driving market wagons, taking droves of cattle to market, working in factories of different kinds, selling and buying fish, meat, vegetables, or any thing else, preparing meat for the Monday market, posting books, writing letters of business, planning and arranging business to be executed on other days of the week—all these practices are flagrant breaches of the fourth commandment. A worldly spirit, disregarding the authority of God, may form excuses to justify these practices ; but they are, nevertheless contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the commandment ; and are in the sight of God profanations of the Sabbath, and provoke his wrath upon those who are guilty of them.

6. The Sabbath is violated by worldly recreations, even those which are lawful on other days. Such are the too common practices of walking and riding out for recreation, giving and receiving visits, and the like. That such practices are contrary to the spirit of the fourth commandment, the sincere, and spiritual christian need scarcely be told. Fashionable and worldly professors of religion, who while they profess to believe the Scriptures, in fact are either strangers to them, or else explain away their strict and spiritual import, and are expecting heaven in some other way than the word of God warrants, may plead for such recreations as innocent; but the word of God condemns them and spiritual christians will disapprove of them. The commandment is, " remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." We certainly do not keep the day holy, when we ride or walk for our amusement or recreation ; or when we visit and engage in light or worldly conversation. And the following text Is. LVIII. 13. is pointedly against such practices, " If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy *pleasure* on my holy

day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own *pleasure*, nor speaking thine own words." Here finding our own pleasure on the Sabbath day is condemned; and therefore riding and walking out for pleasure, and paying social visits. And if any plead for these things, they act contrary to the word of God. Some, thoughtless and gay, impatient of the restraints of the Sabbath, and bent on pleasure, may disregard these admonitions, and determine to pursue their worldly pleasures on the Lord's day. To such I would cite the words of the wisest of men, and spoken under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "Rejoice O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." Eccl. xi 9. You will feel differently when death, which you now forget, summons you to appear at the bar of God, and when you come to stand before that God on whose authority you now trample, and whose commandments you refuse to obey.

We have now taken a cursory view of the duties required, and the sins forbidden in the fourth commandment. Before we conclude the subject, it will be important to remark, that it is the duty of heads of families, to see that the Sabbath is thus observed, externally, by all under their care. This is clearly evident from the words of the commandment itself, "thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." Hence it is clearly the duty of heads of families to take care that their children and servants, and all under their charge, externally observe the Sabbath day. And they ought to enforce its observance upon them by their precepts, their example, and their authority. This is a duty, which we have reason to fear is frequently neglected, and that much guilt is contracted in this way. Are there not some, who although they do not engage themselves, in secular business on the Sabbath day, yet permit or require those who belong to them, or who are in their employ to labour on this day? The masters or the employers, are in this case chargeable with the sin

of Sabbath breaking, as well as those who labour for them. —Yea, while the latter are by no means excusable, the former are the principals in the sin, and have a great weight of guilt resting upon their souls ; for they not only ruin their own souls, but by their advice, or their authority, and the temptation of gain which they hold out, are accessory to the eternal ruin of the souls of others. Again, are their not many, who suffer their children and servants and others under their care, to take their own pleasure on the Sabbath day ? and stroll about the streets, and fields, or go abroad on parties of pleasure, and oftentimes engage in conduct which would be wicked and disgraceful on any day. Such heads of families are partakers in these sins of those under their care ; and are with them chargeable with great guilt in the sight of God.

In the conclusion of this discourse, be exhorted, my hearers, to compare yourselves with the law of God which we have been considering. Doubtless on the comparison, we will all have reason to say, we have come short of our duty, and have transgressed. And perhaps some of you will be compelled to acknowledge, at the bar of your consciences that you have often been guilty of those more flagrant, and gross violations which have been pointed out. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Let us in the glass of the law behold our sins, and be convinced of them ; let a sense of our sins drive us to Christ for pardon ; and let us be more careful in future to remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Many and weighty motives urge to a strict observance of this commandment. Such as the goodness of God in allowing us such a large portion of time for our own employments; his claiming the Sabbath as his own, and enforcing our observance of it by his authority ; his own example ; the blessing he has put upon it, making it a blessing to nations, and to individuals, both in a temporal and spiritual respect, when it is duly observed ; and the civil consequences, of transgressing this commandment, both to individuals and the community. But these reasons shall be the subject of another discourse.—

SERMON LXX.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 8, 9, 10, 11.

"*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man servant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.*"

In the preceding discourse were pointed out, the manner, in which the Sabbath is to be sanctified, and what acts are a breach of the law respecting this institution.—It was then shown that it is our duty to rest from all secular business, and worldly recreations; and to spend the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much of it as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy And it was also shown how this commandment is broken; viz. by the omission or careless performance of the duties required, by spending the day in idleness, by worldly thoughts and conversation, by following our worldly business, whether in public or secret, and by worldly recreations. It remains now to endeavour to enforce the observance of the Sabbath.

The reasons which will be urged are contained in the commandment itself in these words. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God—For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day." Or as they are stated in our Catechism in answer to the 62d question.

"*What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?*

The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employment, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the Sabbath day."

According to this answer, the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment to enforce obedience to it are four viz.

I. God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments.

II. His challenging a special propriety in the seventh, as peculiarly his own.

III. His own example.

IV. His blessing the Sabbath day.

To these reasons your attention is invited in the ensuing discourse.

I. The first reason why we should observe the Sabbath day is that God has allowed us six days of the week for our own employments. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." God has an indubitable right to all our time, and therefore certainly has a right to dispose of it as he pleases. But he has given us a large portion, in which to pursue our worldly business, and has reserved a small portion, only the one seventh part, to be specially and exclusively devoted to his immediate service. He has therefore been very kind to us, and it is highly equitable that we should devote to him that small proportion which he has reserved for himself. And it is certainly very unreasonable, that where God, who has a right to all our time, has given us six days out of seven for our own employments, we should encroach upon the seventh, and take this also.

II. The second reason given is God's challenging a special propriety in the seventh day as peculiarly his own. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." In these words God asserts his authority over us, and right to appoint a Sabbath, and lays a peculiar claim to this day as his property; and it is sacrilege or robbery of God, to devote this day to our own worldly purposes, or to spend it in a way different from what God has commanded us to do.

III. The duty of observing the Sabbath is enforced by the example of God. "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested

the seventh day." The ways of the Lord are perfect, and therefore his example, as far as it is imitable, ought to be followed by us; and we ought to be diligent in our respective lawful callings six days of the week, and on the seventh we ought to rest from our worldly employments, and spend it in the duties of devotion.

IV. The last reason given for the observance of the Sabbath day is that God has blessed it. "Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day." By the Lord's blessing the Sabbath day, we are to understand, that he hath put his blessing upon it, and makes it a blessing especially to those who keep it aright. And if there is a blessing connected with the observance of this day, it is implied that a curse is connected with the breach or neglect of it.

It has been and still is a great blessing both in a temporal and spiritual respect; and the breach of it has been and still is followed with present loss and eternal ruin.

That the Sabbath is a blessing appears from the declaration of our Saviour, Mark. ii. 27. "The Sabbath was made for man"—that is, it was made for the good of man.

The same appears from several texts of Scripture in which promises are made to the observance of this day. In Lev. xxvi. we read that the Lord having commanded the Israelites to keep his Sabbaths, made many precious promises to them in case of their obedience; such as rain in due season, plenty in all their borders, victory over their enemies, peace, religious privileges, and the presence and favour of God. We have also several promises both of a temporal and spiritual nature, made to obedience to this commandment, in the following text.—Is. LVI. 4. 7. "Thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths. Even unto them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it—Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." Is. LVIII. 13. 14. "If thou turn away thy foot from the

Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father." And just before the Babylonish captivity, when the Jews had become exceedingly degenerate, the prophet Jeremiah, while he was denouncing the heavy judgments of God against them, was commissioned to say to them Jer. xvii. 24, 26. "And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me saith Lord, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots, and on horses, they and their princes, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever." All these promises which have been quoted teach us that the Sabbath is a great blessing, and that in observing it, there is great reward.

The same is taught also by the threatenings denounced against the transgressors of this commandment. Among the Israelites the Lord directed that the Sabbath-breaker should be put to death. And we have an instance Numb. xv. 32. &c. where this law was by the express direction of God executed. In Lev. xxvi. the Lord threatened the Israelites, if they did not keep his Sabbath, with numerous and terrible judgments, such as sickness, drought, wild beasts, war, pestilence, and famine; and if they would not reform under all these judgments, that then their cities should be laid wase, their sanctuaries and their land be dessolated, and they be scattered among the Heathen. And Jer. xvii. 27. he threatened them, "if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." These threatenings hold up a warning to Sabbath-breakers, and shew that they not only lose the blessing promised to those who observe this day; but also bring positive misery upon themselves.

The advantages of the Sabbath, and that therefore it is a blessing may be proved by several other considerations. We shall consider its advantages to individuals, both in a temporal and spiritual respect, and then show that it is also a blessing to the community at large.

1. The institution of the Sabbath is a great blessing to individuals in a temporal respect. The constitution of man is such that a day of rest from bodily labour and employment is necessary to refresh and invigorate it; and especially have servants who are doomed to constant labour a necessity of such a day of rest. And we find Deut. v. 15. this given as a reason for the observance of the Sabbath, "that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou." In this way the Sabbath, by that rest which it affords from bodily labour, promotes a man's temporal happiness; and by guarding his health, and the vigour of his constitution is calculated eventually to advance his estate.

Again, that an observance of the Sabbath is calculated to advance a man's estate is proved from this consideration—Sabbath-breaking greatly tends to harden the heart and lessen and destroy the fear of God, and thus proves an inlet to many other vices which retard the acquisition of property, and oftentimes greatly injure it.—Further, where the head of a family by his example, or connivance, or authority, causes those under his care to break the Sabbath, they will be much less likely to be faithful to his interest, than if they paid a conscientious regard to this day, and attended upon its instructions.—For its instructions are calculated to repress vicious inclinations, and strengthen virtuous resolutions, and promote a conscientious regard to duty. And the servant who has no fear of God before his eyes, and who can without hesitation rob God, will not be as likely to be faithful to his master's interests as one who is actuated by regard to the authority of God. Thus the observance of the Sabbath will be likely to make those under our care, or in our employ, more faithful to our interests and thus promote our temporal advantage.

In further confirmation of the position that a man's temporal interest is best promoted by an observance of the Sabbath, let us recur to facts. Go to our jails, and inquire into the history of those there confined for crimes,

and who by their crimes have ruined their families, and I believe you will almost universally find that they were Sabbath-breakers. Yea I believe that generally, you will find, that that course of wickedness which has led to the penitentiary and the gallows, commenced in Sabbath-breaking. " Many malefactors, (says an eminent* writer on the Sabbath) at their last hour have acknowledged that Sabbath-breaking was their leading sin, and the occasion of all the rest of their wicked courses." Another †author remarks, " that he doth not know that ever he observed any repentance in a malefactor who did not bitterly lament his neglect of his duty to God on that day." Go again into places where the Sabbath is generally disregarded, and contrast the temporal prosperity of the people, with that of those who live where the Sabbath is carefully observed; and which will you find most flourishing? I feel no hesitation in saying that I believe the comparison will be in favour of the places where the Sabbath is observed.—These facts all undeniably prove that a man's temporal interest, is best advanced by a careful observance of the Sabbath day.

The same is further forcibly established, by this consideration, that we are dependent on the Providence of God to prosper our exertions to obtain wealth. And can we reasonably expect his blessing, when in direct opposition to his command clearly made known unto us, we take his time to advance our object? I believe that Providence often signally blasts the exertions of those who make encroachments on his day. Numerous instances in confirmation of this remark might be adduced both from history and from our own acquaintance with the world.—The judgments of God have been signally pointed against this sin; and by one stroke of heaven, the Sabbath-breaker has often lost more, than all the gains of the Sabbath; and the Lord has taken away his unlawful gain, or that which he got by robbing him of his time, if I may so speak, with heavy interest. Yea oftentimes he has summoned the sinner to his bar, in the very act of breaking the Sabbath. A very large proportion of those fatal accidents of which we weekly hear, I believe takes place on the Sabbath day; and the subjects of them are Sabbath-

*Willison. †Turner.

breakers. Hereby God is constantly holding up a warning against this sin. But alas! One of the crying sins of mankind is, they discern not the operations of the divine hand. But supposing we do not see in every case immediate marks of the divine displeasure, blasting the efforts of the Sabbath-breaker, yet in these cases I believe he often does, though insensibly, so withhold his blessing as to prevent his prosperity. And I exceedingly doubt my brethren, whether a man ever advanced his temporal interest, by taking the Lord's time in which to do it. And if any do appear to prosper in this course, I hesitate not to say their prosperity is cursed, and they are heaping treasure together for the last days. And here permit me to subjoin a quotation from the writings of that eminent civilian, Sir Matthew Hale lord chief justice of the king's bench, England. "I have found (said he) by a strict and diligent observation, that a due observing the duty of the Lord's day, hath ever had joined to it a blessing upon the rest of my time; and the week that hath been so begun, hath been blessed and prosperous to me: And, on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week hath been unsuccessful and unhappy to my secular employments. And this I do not write lightly or inconsiderately, but upon a long and sound observation and experience." Again in another place he saith, "I thank God, I ever found that in the strictest observations of the times of his worship, I ever met with the best advantage to my worldly occasions; and that whenever my worldly occasions encroached upon those times, I met with disappointment, though in things of the most probable success. It hath been and ever shall be to me, a conviction beyond all argument, and demonstration whatsoever, that God expects the observation of his times. It would be a sad presage unto me, of the severe anger of my Maker, if my inadvertence should cast me upon a temporal undertaking upon this day, and that it should prosper." From all the preceding remarks we confidently conclude that the Sabbath is a temporal blessing to individuals.

2. We proceed next to show that it is a spiritual blessing. Admitting that man has an immortal soul, that he is destined for another and eternal state of existence, and that he must possess the religion of the Scriptures to be

in favour with God, and secure his future happiness, then the Sabbath is a great spiritual blessing ; for it is signally calculated to promote his spiritual and eternal interests. It peculiarly calls his attention every seventh day to the care of his soul, and to preparation for eternity. If it were not for the Sabbath many could find no time for gaining a knowledge of these important concerns ; and most of those who have time, would not take it. We know even among us, notwithstanding all the seriousness which is excited in our minds on the Sabbath, the business and amusements of the world frequently, in the short period of a week, almost eradicate all that we have gained on the Sabbath. What then would be the case if we had no Sabbath ? The proneness of man to forget God and neglect eternity, is so great, that we have reason to believe religion would be banished from the earth. The Sabbath is the grand palladium of religion, and this the enemies of piety well know ; and never was a more promising effort made to destroy religion, than that not long since made by a European nation to blot out the memory of the Sabbath, by converting the week into a decade. Thousands of souls now on earth and ten thousand times ten thousand, who surround the throne in heaven can from experience bear testimony to the importance of the Sabbath in promoting the spiritual and eternal interests of the soul, and therefore that it is a great spiritual blessing.

3. The Sabbath has been and still is a blessing to the community at large, and Sabbath breaking has injured and ruined nations. It is certain that religion is necessary to the well being of civil society. This is acknowledged even by infidel politicians. But as has just been shown the institution of the Sabbath is of the highest importance to religion. The conclusion necessarily follows, that the observance of the Sabbath is of high importance to the well-being of civil society. Again it is certain that the fear of a Supreme Being is of the utmost importance, and absolutely necessary to the well-being, if not the very existence of civil society. This has a powerful influence to restrain from those secret crimes, which might be perpetrated, and which would much disturb, if not destroy civil society. But of the important influence of the Sabbath to promote the fear of God, there can be no reasonable doubt. Hence we again draw the conclusion that

the Sabbath is a great blessing to civil society. This is true under every form of government; but more especially under a republican form, such as ours. To the well-being of this form of government, virtue in the people is more especially necessary. Virtue is allowed by the wisest politicians to be the very spring of a republican government. Reason and the example of republics which have existed in the world both teach us that when a general corruption of manners takes place, a republican government cannot continue to exist. Hence, as the Sabbath has a most important influence on the preservation and promotion of virtue among a people; its observance is of peculiar importance to a republic, and therefore to our country.

This is the leading principle on which legislators have enacted laws to enforce the observance of the Sabbath.—It is of importance to the interests of society. And here it may be proper to remark that we have an additional reason why we should observe the Sabbath, or at least abstain from the external breaches of it, in this consideration, the laws of our State require it; and if we respect the laws framed by men of our own choice, and would maintain the character of good citizens, we are bound to obey.

Further the word and providence of God teach us that the observance of the Sabbath is of advantage to the community. Many promises as we have already seen were made to the nation of Israel in case they observed this institution, and many judgments were denounced against them in case they disregarded it. And these promises and threatenings were fulfilled. While the nation generally kept the Sabbath they prospered; but when they did not they were brought into affliction. And Sabbath-breaking was a leading sin which provoked God to send from time to time his heavy judgments upon them; and this was especially the sin for which their land was desolated, and its inhabitants carried captive into Chaldea.—Thus we read Ez. xx. 13, 15, 16. "The house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness—my Sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness to consume them. I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them; be-

cause they polluted my Sabbaths." From this passage we learn that Sabbath-breaking was a leading cause of the judgments which the Israelites suffered in the wilderness. And that this was one principal procuring cause of the heavy calamities which they suffered from the Chaldeans, appears from the following texts, Ez. xxii. 8, 13, 15— "Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my Sabbaths. Behold therefore I will scatter thee among the Heathen, and disperse thee in the countries, and will consume thy filthiness out of thee." 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. the historian having given an account of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of the Jews by the Chaldeans, adds, "to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath to fulfil three score and ten years." And also, Neh. xiii. 17, 18. "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath." In these judgments which came upon Israel, all nations who live under the light of revelation have a warning against this sin. And since the law respecting the Sabbath is still in force, we have reason to believe that when nations now generally neglect and transgress the Sabbath they will be visited with the divine judgments. And we have every reason to believe that Sabbath-breaking has been one principal cause of the awful judgments which the nations have in modern times experienced.

We shall now close this subject with a few reflections.

From what has been said, it is evident the Sabbath is a benevolent institution, and was appointed by the benevolent Creator for the good of man. It is calculated to promote the interests of society, and advance the temporal, spiritual, and eternal happiness of individuals. We ought therefore highly to prize it, be thankful to God for it, and carefully observe it and see that it is observed by all under our care.

Many of you my hearers I believe do esteem this day, a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honourable; and do

observe and are thankful for it. But are there not some here and multitudes in our land, who pay little or no regard to this day, but live in the habitual and open neglect and violation of its duties? Such are injuring themselves in this world, and are ruining their souls forever. And the evil does not terminate with themselves; if it did, it would, though great, be comparatively less. But by their authority, influence, and example, they are leading others into the same sin and ruin. They are greatly injuring the cause of religion; they are poisoning the public morals; they are provoking the judgments of God upon our country; and are doing much to destroy our religious and civil institutions, and to banish religion, virtue, and civil liberty from our land. And are not such persons highly criminal? And if *they* are criminal, what must we think of those who go still further, and trampling on human and divine authority, and setting at defiance the laws of their country, and the laws of God not only break the Sabbath, but oppose every attempt at reformation in this respect? Surely the judgments of Heaven will sooner or later overtake these persons. And we have reason to fear will also fall upon a land, where such a spirit prevails.

If it were not for the despised remnant, who respect the institution of the Sabbath, and who are endeavouring, by their prayers, their example, their influence, and their exertions, to stem the torrent of vice and avert the judgments of heaven, our land would doubtless soon experience the desolating judgments of a sin-hating God.—Let those who respect and love the Sabbath, use all lawful and practicable exertions to maintain it. It is the grand palladium of our inestimable religious and civil institutions. If the former be destroyed, the latter must go with it. But my hearers God will not suffer it to be destroyed. He has maintained it in all ages, and he will still maintain it, against the joint attempts of wicked men and devils. Yea we have reason to believe the time is near at hand, when he will either convert the enemies of the Sabbath into friends, or destroy them. For the time will come, and we hope it is nigh, when according to prophecy, "from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before the Lord." Is. LXVI. 23. The next verse teaches us what will then have become of Sab-

bath-breakers. "And they (that is all flesh who keep the Sabbath and come to worship before the Lord) shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

And now let me earnestly exhort those who have been in the habit of violating the Sabbath, to break off from this sin and "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Consider attentively the reasons which have been offered, and let them have their due weight upon your minds. If you have any regard to the principles of equity, observe the Sabbath, for God has given you six days out of seven. Ought you not then to devote the seventh to his service? If you have any regard to the authority of God, by whom you must soon be judged, keep the Sabbath, for it is his command. If you have any respect to his example, rest on the Sabbath, for he has set you this example. And if you have any regard to his blessing, keep the Sabbath, for he has blessed it, and appointed it to be a blessing. Would you prosper in your temporal pursuits? Would you avoid the blasts of heaven on your pursuits and possessions? Would you not have your very blessings cursed? Would you leave an inheritance to your children without the curse of God entailed upon it? Keep the Sabbath and see that it is observed by all under your care. Do you love your country? Have you any regard to its welfare? Would you promote its happiness, and prevent its ruin? Have you any respect to the laws of your country; and would you maintain a just claim to the character of good citizens? Cease to violate the Sabbath. And above all would you avoid eternal perdition? Would you not destroy your souls forever? And be instrumental in the destruction of the souls of others? Then cease from the sin of Sabbath-breaking, and remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. My hearers, the truth of God is before you,—enforced by numerous and solemn considerations. If Sabbath-breakers are determined to go on, I am clear of your blood, I have warned you. Remember you act contrary to light, and I have no doubt contrary to your consciences. It is at your peril. And in the presence of God, I solemnly tell you in his name, his wrath will abide upon you.

SERMON LXXI.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT.

DUTIES OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS.

EXODUS XX. 12.

"*Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*"

The moral law, summarily comprehended in the ten commandments, was written with the finger of God, on two tables of stone. The first table had written on it the first four commandments, containing our duty to God; and the second table had written on it the last six commandments, which contain our duty to man. We have attended to the duties of the first table, and come now in course to treat of those of the second.

The fifth commandment, respects not only the duties which arise out of the relation of parents and children, in their proper sense; but also relative duties generally. By father and mother in this commandment, we are to understand all superiors in age, gifts, and authority; and consequently by those who are commanded to honour their father and mother, we are to understand not only children, but also all inferiors in age, gifts, and station. In this sense the authors of our catechism, and commentators generally have understood this commandment; and this explanation is warranted by the Scriptures. Thus superiors in age are sometimes called fathers and mothers, as I. Tim. v. 1, 2. "Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a *father;* the elder women as *mothers.*" Superiors in gifts are also styled fathers: Gen. iv. 20, 21; "Jabal was the *father* of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And Jubal was the *father* of all such as handle the harp and organ." Great men are sometimes called *fathers* as was Naaman the Syrian by his servants; II Kings v. 13. Men of honour and usefulness in

the church are also sometimes so called. Thus Elisha called Elijah, father, II. Kings ii. 12; and Joash king of Israel called Elisha father, II. Kings xiii. 14. And good kings and queens are sometimes called fathers and mothers, as Is. xlix. 23. "And kings shall be thy nursing *fathers* and their queens thy nursing *mothers*." From these and many other texts, we are warranted to explain the fifth commandment of the relations of life generally. Considered in this sense, it will include not only the duties and sins of parents and children; but also of husbands and wives, masters and servants, rulers and ruled, and ministers and people. To each of these relations we shall attend in their order.

The first relation which claims our attention is that of parents and children. The fifth commandment is particularly addressed to children, and especially points out their duties; but the corresponding duties of parents are evidently implied. We begin with the duties of children towards their parents.

To point out and enforce these duties is the object of the ensuing discourse.

I. What are the duties which children owe to parents?

These duties are expressed in the commandment by the word *honour*, which must be taken in an extensive latitude, as comprising the whole duty of children towards their parents. "Honour thy father and thy mother" signifies the same thing as be dutiful to them.

1. It is the duty of children to *love* their parents. While children, next to God, they ought to love their parents. Love is one principle from which all their other duties ought to be performed.

2. They ought to *respect* them. This is taught by the letter of the commandment itself, "honour thy father and thy mother." And we read, Mal. i. 6. "A son honoureth his father"—we ought to think and speak respectfully of them. And on the contrary we ought not to think contemptuously of them; we ought never to speak disrespectfully of them, or speak in an impudent or unbecoming manner to them, as some wicked children do; and we ought never to conduct towards them disrespectfully, or by our conduct in life dishonour them. If they have failings, still they are our parents; and their failings will not warrant disrespect or contempt on one part as chil-

dren. The wickedness of such conduct is clearly taught in the following passages of Scripture—Deut, xxvii. 16. "Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother; and all the people shall say, amen." Prov. xx. 20. Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." And Ham was highly censured for his disrespect to his father Noah, though the father had acted in a very unbecoming manner.

3. Children ought to render a ready *obedience* to all the lawful commands of their parents. They ought to study to please them; and when they know their will, be ready to fulfil it, without delay. They ought to obey, not from a principle of slavish fear, or because they are afraid of correction if they do not; but from a sense of duty, and out of love to their parents; and they ought to obey all their commands, with a single exception; for the command of God is, "children obey your parents in all things." Col. iii. 20.

The exception alluded to is this, when parents command children to commit sin. For the command of God is, "children obey your parents *in the Lord;* Eph. vi. 1. Parents have a right to command their children; but this right does not authorize them to command their children to break God's laws, or require children to obey such commands. The authority of God is paramount to all other; and where the parents commands contradict those of God, children are to obey God rather than their parents. For Christ hath said, Mat. x. 37; "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." When therefore parents impose commands upon children to do things forbidden by the law of God, such as to swear, lie, defraud, break the Sabbath, and the like, children are not under obligations to obey such commands. Nay, it is at the peril of incurring God's wrath if they do. But in all other cases, children are bound to obedience.

4. It is the duty of children to *hearken* to the *instructions* of their parents, when these instructions, are not sinful. Thus Solomon exhorted, "hear ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." Prov. iv. 1. It is an important duty incumbent on parents to instruct their children, in the knowledge of the common affairs of life, and especially in the things of religion. And children ought to have a teachable disposition, and

willingly, and with pleasure, and thankfulness, listen to, and receive the instructions of their parents.

5. Children ought patiently to *submit* to *correction* from their parents, and profit by it. Correction is a painful duty; but it is an important one, and oftentimes necessary for your good. God has enjoined it upon parents. Thus we read, Prov. xiii. 24. "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. Prov. xix. 28; "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." Prov. xxiii. 13, 14; Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell." And Prov. xxix. 15, 17; "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest: yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul." From these texts, children, you see, that God commands parents to correct you, when necessary, for your faults; and when other means fail to restrain you, if they spare the rod, even though they do it out of tenderness to you, it is a mistaken and criminal tenderness, and God declares they hate you. It is the duty of parents to correct their children for their faults, when advice and admonition fail to restrain them; and it is the duty of children to receive their corrections with patience and submission; and instead of being petulant, and obstinate, and feeling anger towards their parents, when corrected, to be sorry for their faults, which has rendered correction necessary, and to resolve to do so no more.

6. Once more. It is the duty of children, to *bear* with the infirmities of their parents, when they become old; and then especially to be kind to them and endeavour to comfort them; and if parents have become poor or helpless, it is the bounden duty of children according to their ability to *assist* them. It is recorded to the honour of Joseph that he nourished his aged father; Gen. xlvii 12. And the command of God is, "despise not thy mother, when she is old;" Prov. xxiii. 22. That child must want natural affection, and be a monster in human form, who has wherewith to support and comfort parents in their old age or infirmity, and can see them in want and distress, and not administer the needed support and conso-

lation. And I may add further, that the curse of God will rest upon such children. Thus I have pointed out the duties of children to their parents.

Before we leave this head it will be proper to inquire, how long are the duties which have been pointed out, binding on children? Some of them, such as love, respect, and care, and assistance when necessary, are binding as long as the parents live. But the parental authority, at least in a great degree ceases, when the child comes to mature age and begins to act for itself in the world. Until this period, while the child continues under the parents care and subject to his direction and controul, it is his duty to obey, but after this period the strict obligation to obedience ceases; and though the child is bound to love and honour his parents, and respect their advice, yet perhaps we may safely say, parents have no right to impose commands, or go any further than to give advice.

II. We proceed to enforce the duty which children owe to parents.

1. The duties which we have pointed out are highly *reasonable.* When we consider that parents were the instruments of their being; when we consider the helpless state of the child in infancy, and its dependent state in childhood and youth; when we consider what parents have borne for their children; when we reflect on the great care necessary in infancy; and oftentimes the sleepless nights they have spent, and in time of sickness the painful watchings they have endured, and the dreadful anxiety they have felt, lest they should die and not live; when we consider the care, anxiety, and trouble which children give parents during the whole period of their tender years, the expense of their support and education, and their exertions to render them comfortable and respectable in life, and even after the parents themselves are gone—when we consider all these things, must we not without hesitation subscribe to the reasonableness of the duty in all the extent in which it has been explained, "Honour thy father, and thy mother?" The duty of children to parents is founded in the nature of things. Reason teaches us it is right, that children should love, respect, and obey their parents, hearken to their instructions, submit to their corrections, and when

they are old, bear with their infirmities, and if necessary, exert themselves to give them a comfortable maintenance. My young friends let me exhort you seriously to reflect on this subject. Think what your parents have endured for you, of the months they nursed you in your helpless infancy, of their anxiety for you during the thoughtless years of childhood, and of the anxiety they still feel during the period of giddy youth. Some of you have perhaps often been sick even before the time of which you now have any recollection. Think of the attention you then received from your parents, of the anxious days and the sleepless nights they then spent, of the achings of heart which they then endured, while your life hung in suspense; and perhaps under God, you owe it to their unremitted care and attention that you are now alive and in health. And can you now refuse them love, respect, and obedience? Can you now do an action which would give them a moment's pain? Much less, can you by your conduct give them more anxiety and pain than your helpless infancy occasioned? Can you by your disobedience, rend the hearts of your parents? Especially can you renew with increased acuteness the pangs of the mother that bare you? Is that mother pious? And is she travailing in birth for your soul until Christ be formed within you? And do you turn a deaf ear to her pious counsels and reproofs? Ah! cruel youth! you are acting contrary to every principle of reason, and every dictate of nature. Cease from your disobedience, and cruelty; and be persuaded by all that your parents have done and endured and are still doing, to do your duty to them.

2. This duty is enforced by the *precepts* of the word of God. The command in our text is positive, "honour thy father, and thy mother." Similar to this are several other passages of Scripture, such as the following. Lev. xix. 3. "Ye shall fear, every man, his mother and his father." Prov. iv. 1. "Hear ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding." Prov. i. 8. "My son hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Prov. vi. 20. "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." Prov. xxiii. 22. "Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is

old." Eph. vi. 1. "Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." And Col, iii. 20. "Children obey your parents in all things." Such are the commands of God, in his word on this subject. Children and youth, do you regard the authority of the great God, who has the right of authority over you, in whose hands you are, and to whom you must one day give an account? then honour your father and mother; for this is his command.

3. This duty is enforced by the *promises* which God hath made to the obedient. He has declared filial obedience to be well-pleasing to him, Col. iii. 20. "Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord." And when he gave the commandment on Sinai, he annexed a promise to it. "Honour thy father, and thy mother, that *thy days may be long* upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In the repetition of this commandment, Deut. v. 16. the promise is expressed a little more full. "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God commanded thee, that thy days may be prolonged; and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This commandment is quoted, with a little variation in the promise, by the Apostle Eph. vi. 2, 3. "Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth." Hence we learn that God is well pleased with filial obedience, and that he has promised temporal blessings to obedient children. This promise was not made exclusively to the Jews; for the ten commandments were intended for all ages of the world; and the Apostle quotes the promise to enforce filial obedience on the children of christians. The import and force of this promise are well explained in our Catechism.

"*The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, is a promise of long life and prosperity, as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and their own good, to all such as keep this commandment.*"

This is a promise of a long and prosperous life to obedient children. This was probably more frequently fulfilled, in the letter of it, under the Old Testament than now. The promise is probably more frequently fulfilled now by spiritual blessings. But still I believe it is often literally fulfilled, of which we may be convinced by carefully observing the dealings of divine providence, towards

those who have faithfully discharged their duty towards their parents. There is no duty which God appears more signally to follow with temporal prosperity than this.—Would you then, my young friends, have the blessing of heaven to crown your days with temporal prosperity, honour your parents..

4. God has in the strongest manner expressed his *abhorrence* of disobedience in children, and pronounced *dreadful woes* against them. In that dreadful catalogue of the sins of the Gentile world which is recorded in the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans, disobedience to parents is mentioned, and classed with the enormous sins of murder, hating God, covenant-breaking, and want of natural affection. And the same Apostle in his epistle to Timothy, speaking of the perilous times that should come in the last days, gives as the reason, that men would be great sinners ; and he enumerates a catalogue of most atrocious sinners and classes among them the disobedient to parents. These passages show that this is a heinous sin. And if we look through the Scriptures we shall find many threatenings denounced against the transgressors of this commandment. In the Jewish law, God directed that the obstinately disobedient child should be put to death ; as we read Deut. xxi. 18, 21. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them : then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place : and they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice ; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die : so shalt thou put evil away from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear." Again we read Lev. xx. 9. "Every one that curseth his father or his mother, shall be surely put to death : he hath cursed his father or his mother ; his blood shall be upon him." This law delivered by God himself to his people of old shows, the evil nature of this crime, and his great abhorrence of it. The great wickedness and danger of transgressing this commandment are also proved by the following texts, Deut. xxvii. 16. "cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother : and all the

people shall say, Amen." Pro. xx. 20. "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness." And Pro. xxx. 17. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it." This last text is probably not so much to be understood literally as of the fearful end to which such wicked children generally come. And all these texts show God's great displeasure against undutiful children.

5. Once more, this duty is enforced by *examples* which we have on record. Christ has set an example. which it is the duty of children to follow. Though he was the son of God as well as the son of Mary, yet of him it is recorded Luk. ii. 51. " and he went down with them (that is Joseph and Mary) and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." The obedience of the children of Jonadab to the commands of their father. met with the marked approbation of God, and he greatly blessed them for it. As we learn from Jer. xxxv. 18, 19. "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you : therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me forever." Here we have an instance of the blessing of God signally following obedience to parents. And we have also in the Scriptures instances of the divine vengeance in a signal manner overtaking disobedient children in this life. Absalom was a disobedient son, and he came to an untimely end. Hophni and Phinehas the sons of Eli were disobedient children, and the vengeance of God in a remarkable manner overtook them ; and Ham the son of Noah was an undutiful son, and a curse fell upon him and his posterity. Children and youth, these examples were recorded for your instruction, take warning from them, and do your duty to your parents. And I believe that every age has witnessed examples, wherein God has signally blessed obedience, and frowned on disobedience to the fifth commandment. Inquire into the history of those who are now vagabonds in our streets, and I believe you will generally find, they were disobedi-

ent children. Go to our state prisons, and inquire into the history of the younger years of the miserable culprits, there confined, and I believe you will generally find they were disobedient children. Go to the gallows and inquire of the unhappy wretch who is just about to be launched into eternity for his crimes, what was his conduct in early life towards his parents, and I believe, you will generally find, he was a disobedient child.

My young friends, consider all these weighty motives, and if any of you have heretofore been undutiful children, cease this wicked and dangerous course, and be induced ever to honour your father and mother, in all the extent of this command. To this you are urged, by the reasonableness of the duty, by the authority of God, by his promises to the obedient, by his threatenings against the disobedient, and by the examples which occur in his word, and which we see or hear of in the world around us.

SERMON LXXII.

DUTIES OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN.

EPHESIANS VI. 4.

"*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*"

These words contain one class of relative duties included in the fifth commandment, viz. those of parents towards their children. Fathers only are here mentioned; but undoubtedly, both parents are intended. The phrase "provoke not your children to wrath," signifies, not that parents should never cross their children; but that they should not by passionate or unreasonable commands or correction, irritate their tempers. "The nurture and admonition of the Lord," include the whole duty of parents towards their children. *Nurture* may embrace nourishment in its utmost extent, as it relates to both bo-

dy and mind. The word *admonition* expresses counsel and reproof, especially with regard to religion.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to point out *the duties of parents to children.*

The duties of parents begin very early. As soon as children are born, it is the duty of parents to take a tender *care* of them. Even irrational animals manifest a tender care of their young offspring ; but of all the kinds of animals, the human species are the most helpless, and most and longest need the care of parents. And God has for their security, while in this helpless state, wisely implanted in parents, a natural love of their children. Hence a want of tender care in parents, towards their infant children, would prove them to be more brutish than the irrational animals. And such parents are monsters in human form.

It is the duty of parents also to *provide* for their children, during their younger years, things necessary for their support and comfort. For "if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8.— Hence the indolent, who through idleness neglect to provide for their families ; and the prodigal, who through dissipation waste their property, and deprive their children of a comfortable living, transgress the fifth commandment. Of this sin are those especially guilty, who spend a portion of their daily earnings, at tipling houses, while their children are crying for bread at home, to satisfy the cravings of hunger.

Again, it is the duty of parents to *bring up* their children in such a way, that they may be fitted *to gain a livelihood* and be useful in the world, when they come to act for themselves. They ought to give them the opportunity, to obtain, at least so much of an education, as to fit them for business in life. They ought to endeavour early to lead them into habits of industry and frugality. And however independent the prospects of children may be, they ought to be brought up in such an acquaintance with business of some kind, as to be prepared for a reverse in their circumstances, in this changing world. Many persons, who once had fair prospects have had great reason to deplore the neglect of parents in this respect.

Again it is the duty of parents, to *make provision* for their

children, if they have property, *by an equitable division* of it among them after their death. For Paul tells us, "the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children." 2 Cor. xii. 14.

The above duties, which relate only to the temporal good of children are important; but there are other duties incumbent on parents, which are far more important, I mean those which relate to their spiritual and eternal welfare. These are as much more important than the former, as eternity exceeds time in importance and duration.

We proceed to point out the duties of parents towards their children in regard to their spiritual and eternal welfare. It is their duty to do every thing in their power, which, under the blessing of God, may operate as means, to bring them to the knowledge, love, and practice of true piety, and fit them for everlasting happiness.—More particularly,

1. It is the duty of parents early to *dedicate* their children to God in his holy ordinance of *baptism*; and thus acknowledge God's right to them, and put upon them the seal of the righteousness of faith, which he has appointed, that they may be taken into visible covenant with him, and become partakers of the privileges and blessings connected with this relation. This dedication of children to God in baptism, ought to be done in sincerity and truth, and with a hearty self-dedication. And unless it be done with the heart, it is solemn mockery instead of an acceptable dedication: and the act is offensive to God instead of well-pleasing in his sight. For, "unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth." Ps. L. 16. They who manifest by their lives that they are enemies of God, if they are disposed to rush thoughtlessly into his presence, and take his covenant upon their lips, ought not to be permitted to do it. But, at the same time, parents who neglect the baptism of their children live in sin; for it is the duty of all immediately to be reconciled unto God, and to have right tempers towards him, and thus wait upon him in his ordinances. It is a very wrong conclusion, that our want of preparation takes away our obligation to observe the divine institutions. Unpreparedness is a sin, and one sin will not form

an excuse for another. It is our indispensable duty, immediately to love God; and loving him, it is our duty, and our high privilege to wait upon him in his ordinances.

And here permit me to remark, that what has been said, administers solemn reproof, especially to those parents who profess to have given themselves to God, and yet can neglect for months and years to acknowledge God's right to their children, by bringing them to baptism, and thus deprive them of what the word of God teaches to be an important privilege and benefit. The seal of the righteousness of faith was required to be applied to the children of the Old Testament church, as early as the eighth day, which intimates to us that children ought to be early brought to God in the ordinance of baptism.

Do you ask, of what advantage can this ordinance be to my child? This is not the place, to say much on this subject. But the question may be answered in a few words. Is it not an advantage to have them interested in the prayers for the church, and to be under its watch and care? Is it not an advantage to have them interested in that great promise, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Gen. xvii. 7.? Is it not an advantage to belong to that visible family to which is secured the oracles of God, and the means of religious instruction and grace? And is it not an advantage to make a part of that body, "to whom pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises." Rom. xix. 4.? All these advantages the Scriptures teach us are connected with the right performance of this duty. Let christian parents, who delay or entirely neglect the baptism of their children, seriously think on this subject, and reform their conduct in this respect. If you neglect to give your children to God in baptism, you neglect a very important part of parental duty.

2. It is the duty of parents to *instruct* their children in the things of religion. This is frequently enjoined in the word of God. Thus in the commandments given to the ancient church we find, "teach them thy sons, and thy son's sons. And I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their child-

ren." Deut. iv. 9, 10. "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Deut. vi. 6. 7. The Psalmist in the 78th Psalm, speaking of God's dealings of old, said—"Our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strengh and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments."

Children ought early to be taught the leading historical events recorded in Scripture as performed by the Providence of God. They ought also to be instructed in the leading doctrines of religion, such as the being and perfections of God, the relations they bear to him, the obligations they are under to love and serve him, the shortness and uncertainty of human life, the immortality of their souls, their accountability to God as their Judge, their sinfulness and exposure to the wrath of God, their need of a Saviour, the character, offices, and sufferings of Christ, the way of salvation through him, and him alone, and the nature and necessity of regeneration, repentance, faith, and holy obedience. With such leading principles of religion, children ought to be made acquainted. They ought also to be taught to reverence the institutions of religion, to respect the Sabbath, to attend in the house of God, to read the Scriptures, and to pray.

And here, while on this branch of parental duty, permit me to say a few words on the subject of catechetical instruction. A catechism is intended to contain the great principles of religion, collected from the Scriptures, arranged in systematic order, and expressed in short, in the way of question and answer. This is a very useful way of instructing children and youth. This mode of instruction, was probably used by the Apostles, as some of the

learned have undertaken to show. From ecclesiastical history we know that it was used by the primitive fathers; and that a Catechist was an office of the primitive church. Many of the ancient councils, convinced of the importance of this way of conveying instruction, passed decrees for catechising. This mode of conveying instruction was of much use in advancing the reformation from Popery. Of this the Romish church was so well convinced that it was strongly urged in the celebrated council of Trent, that a catechism should be compiled containing the articles of the Papal religion. And my brethren I believe I may safely assert, that wherever we find the people in general, in a congregation, well informed and established in the great doctrines of religion, there we shall also find catechetical instruction has been carefully attended to; and that in the same congregation they who neglected the catechism while children, will not bear a comparison in point of religious knowledge with those who have been carefully taught them. We also hear the judicatories of our church from the highest to the lowest, frequently, in the addresses which they make to the churches, recommending and earnestly pressing this mode of instruction. Be exhorted therefore my brethren, carefully to attend to the instruction of your children in the catechism. The Westminister catechisms, both Shorter and Larger, are most excellent systems, which I cannot recommend equal to their worth. Be exhorted frequently to read them yourselves, and diligently to teach them to your children. The increased attention to catechetical instruction in this congregation is pleasing. It has doubtless been already greatly blessed to this people, and promises under God to be still a great blessing. But are there not many children who are yet neglected? I earnestly hope that the time may soon come when no children of our congregation will be absent from our public catechisings; when the catechising of families will uniformly make a part of the exercises of the evening of the Lord's Day; and when none of our schools will be found deficient in this branch of education.

3. A third duty incumbent on parents in the religious education of their children, is to set an *example* of piety before them. Human nature, generally speaking, is led more by example than by precept. And this is more espe-

cially the case with the young. Youth is the age of imitation; and the young are especially prone to imitate bad examples. It was a wise maxim of an ancient, "Great respect is due to children," intimating that we ought always to conduct with circumspection in their presence. Parents should be careful to enforce all their instructions by their example, and to convince their children that they live under the influence of those truths which they endeavour to inculcate upon them. Though the instructions of parents be ever so good, they will be of little avail, if their example contradicts their instructions; for they undo with one hand, what they attempt to do with the other. Let the conduct of parents before their children, therefore, prove that they feel what they teach them.

4. Another important duty incumbent on parents, is *prayer* for their children. The apostle enjoins, "in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;" Phil. iv. 6. Although parents can educate their children; yet it is the grace of God alone that can make education an effectual means of salvation. What the Psalmist said on another occasion may be aptly applied here, "except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it;" Ps. cxxvii. 1. Except the Lord add his blessing to the endeavours of parents to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they will labour in vain; and he has appointed that his people should ask in order to receive his blessing. Let parents therefore often bear their children on their hearts at the throne of grace, and earnestly plead with God in their behalf.

5. Another branch of the duty of parents is, by their authority, to *restrain* their children from vicious courses. Parents have the right of authority over their children. They have a right to impose lawful commands; and when other means fail, to enforce these commands by correction. And they not only have the right to correct their children; but when other means fail to restrain them from vice, it is their duty to correct them. Thus we read, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes;" Prov. xiii. 24. "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying;" Prov. xix 18. "Foolishness is bound in the

heart of a child ; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him ;" Prov. xxii. 15. "Withhold not correction from the child ; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell ;" Prov. xxiii. 13, 14. "The rod and reproof give wisdom : but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. Correct thy son and he shall give thee rest ; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul ;" Prov. xxix. 15, 17. Abraham exerted his authority over his children, and he is particularly commended for it : "I know him (said the Lord,) that he will *command* his children, and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord ;" Gen. xviii. 19. But here Eli failed ; and he was condemned for it. When he heard of the great wickedness of his sons, he reproved them, saying, "Why do ye such things ? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons ; for it is no good report that I hear : ye make the Lord's people to transgress ;" 1. Sam. ii. 22, 24. But notwithstanding these reproofs, God denounced and executed judgments upon his house, because he did not go further, and exercise, his authority in endeavouring to restrain them. "I have told him, (said the Lord,) that I will judge his house forever, for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he *restrained* them not." Let parents derive instruction from the examples of these two men ; and not with Eli rest contented with advice and reproof alone when these prove ineffectual ; but with Abraham command their children to do that which is right, and enforce their commands.

And here I would observe that parents ought to be particularly careful, into what company they suffer their children to go, and to keep them from the company of the wicked. This is perhaps one of the greatest dangers to which our children are exposed. "Evil communications corrupt good manners ;" 1 Cor. xv. 33. Children, as has already been observed, are very prone to imitation ; and on account of the propensity to sin in their nature, they are much more prone to imitate evil than good examples. Evil company is therefore exceedingly dangerous, and it is important that parents as they value the souls of their children, should restrain them from such associates. as will set before them a wicked example.

And further, I would here remark, that when parents place their children under the care and authority of other persons, to obtain an education, or be instructed in the knowledge of some mechanic art, their duty to them requires that they should place them in a situation, where they have a security that their immortal interests will not be neglected.

Thus I have pointed out the duties of parents to children. Weighty motives enforce these duties.

1. They are enforced by the *authority of God.* Our text is express ; " Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." And Prov. xxii. 6, we read, " Train up a child in the way he should go." A number of other texts in which parental duty is commanded have already been quoted. The religious education of children is therefore enforced by the authority of God.

2. The duties which have been pointed out are enforced by the *blessed effects* which may follow the performance of them. Reason teaches us that a correct education is of great importance. Of the permanency and strength of the prejudices of education every one must be convinced. Even the Heathen were sensible of the importance of training up children in the way in which they desired them to go. One of them recommended to all parents, the timely education of children, advising to train them up in learning, good manners, and virtuous exercises, since we commonly retain those things in age which we entertained in youth. Another being asked, what he thought most proper for boys to learn, answered, " what they ought to do when they come to be men." And a wiser than either of these has told us under the Spirit of inspiration, " Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old he will not depart from it ;" Prov. xxii. 6. This being the case, it is certainly of vast importance that parents should educate their children aright. The future conduct, and therefore the future respectability, usefulness, and comfort of children in life are intimately concerned in their education; and so also is the prosperity of both church and state, of which they are to compose the future members. For as a general rule, it is certainly true that children well educated will act under the influence of those principles which they received in early years, and thus be respect-

able, useful and happy in life, and a blessing to church and state. And as it respects the happiness of children in a future world, it is certain a religious education is of great importance. As God works by means in religion as well as in other things, there is a connexion between a good education and salvation. This we are taught to believe, not only from the effect which we see education have in other things, but also from the consideration that God has made it the duty of parents, religiously to educate their children. and he would not have done this if it was of no use. Besides he has given great encouragement, if he has not made absolute promises, that the parent's fidelity shall issue in the salvation of the child. The promise to Abraham for his parental fidelity was that his children should keep the way of the Lord ; Gen. xviii. 19. And we also read, "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it ;" Prov. xxii. 6. Similar passages several times occur in the Scriptures. These declarations if they do not amount to absolute promises of salvation to children in consequence of parental fidelity, at least afford great encouragement. The faithfulness of parents has doubtless been often blessed. Many have had reason in this life to bless God for a pious father, and more for a pious mother. Multitudes will have reason, through eternity to thank him for these inestimable privileges. And I believe, with comparatively few exceptions, they are the children of parents who attend to the religious education of their children, who are made partakers of the saving grace of God. Let parents therefore, if they desire or regard the everlasting welfare of their children, be faithful in their religious education ; and let them persevere in faithfulness, and not faint under seeming discouragements. Even though God to try your faith and patience, and to manifest his sovereignty, cause you to wait long, yet he may answer you at last, and your example, prayers, instructions, and reproofs may bring forth saving fruit, after you yourselves have gone to rest.

The example of Monica the mother of the celebrated and pious Augustine of the fifth century deserves here to be mentioned for the encouragement of pious parents, who may be ready to give over their children as incorrigible. Her son was a very dissolute youth; but still she

continued to instruct and exhort him, and daily to wrestle in prayer with God for his conversion. At a certain time she applied to a clergyman to talk with her son, which he from a sense of his incorrigibleness declining to do, she continued entreating him with tears, until he encouraged her with these words, "A child of so many tears cannot perish." And so it issued. At the age of thirty he was turned unto God, and became one of the most pious and useful men, that ever professed the christian faith. Parents, mothers especially, go and do likewise, and you may hope that if you persevere the Lord will grant your requests.

3. I present one other motive, and that is the *dreadful consequences* of unfaithfulness, both to parents and children. The probability is, that if you neglect your duty, your children will be forever lost. The probability of this consequence is clear from what has already been said, Consider then the value of the souls of your children. You love them, and are anxious to provide for them, and procure them respectability and happiness in this world. But these although important are of little consequence in comparison of their eternal happiness. Oh! feel for the everlasting interests of your children, and anxiously endeavour to procure for them the blessing of God. How can you bear the thought that they should be lost! And lost too through your neglect! Besides, remember that great will be your own guilt. And how will you bear to meet them in a future world! O parents, think of these things and be faithful to the souls of your children.

SERMON LXXIII.

DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

COLOSSIANS III. 18, 19.

"*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fit, in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*"

In these words we have contained one of the most important relations of life, viz. that of *husband and wife;* and the duties of this relation are summarily pointed out.

This relation is constituted by marriage, which is an ordinance of God. This ordinance was instituted in the garden of Eden, before the fall of our first parents, by God himself, when he brought the woman to the man, "And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:" And the Lord added, "therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh;" Gen. ii. 23, 24. And our Saviour, when on earth, sanctioned this institution, by being himself present at a marriage, in Cana of Galilee and working a miracle for the accommodation of the guests. Marriage is therefore a relation sanctioned by divine approbation, and divine appointment, and "is honourable in all;" and celibacy, or a voluntary passing through life in a single state, so far from being a virtue, as has been taught by the friends of monastic institutions, contravenes a divine appointment.

It is true the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians, rather advises Christians, except in certain cases, against marriage; but he tells us he spake in this, his own opinion, and not by divine commandment; and his opinion was founded on the then persecuted state of the church. "Now (says he) concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment; I suppose therefore, that this is good for the present dis-

ress. I say that it is good for a man so to be. Art thou bound unto a wife ? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife ?—seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh ;" 1. Cor. vii. 25—28. The church was in an unsettled and persecuted state. Christians had frequently to flee from city to city, and were often exposed to the alternative of either renouncing their religion, or undergoing imprisonment, suffering, and death. In this state of things, the more they were disencumbered with the world, and earthly connexions, the less temptations would they have, to shrink from the trials to which they were exposed. But the apostle by no means advises against marriage as a general principle, but speaks only in relation to the present distress. And he elsewhere frequently makes honourable mention of this relation, and points out the duties arising out of it. And in his epistle to Timothy looking forward with a prophetic spirit to the days of anti-christ, and foretelling the corruptions which would then be introduced, he mentions among others, "forbidding to marry," and calls it a "doctrine of devils ;" 1 Tim. iv. 1, &c. Hence it is evident, no valid objection against this relation can be drawn from the writings of Paul.

Marriage is a very important relation, and ought to be entered into with serious consideration. There is no step which persons take in life, in which their temporal, and not unfrequently, their spiritual happiness are more deeply concerned. But we have reason to fear, few are duly impressed with a sense of the importance of this relation, when they enter it. The direction of the apostle to Christians is to marry, "only in the Lord ;" 1 Cor. viii. 39. And, "be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers : for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Christians know by experience that they have enough within them, to retard their spiritual progress ; that they need every external assistance to help them forward in their journey towards heaven ; and that while believing partners may greatly promote the divine life in the soul, lighten spiritual burdens, by helping to

bear them, and may be a means of quickening them when they grow languid—unbelieving partners give no assistance, but by gradually infusing their spirit may greatly retard them, and by opposition may prove a source of heavy trial.

We have many instances in Scripture where a breach of the rule to marry only in the Lord, has been productive of great evil. The intermarriages of the sons of Seth who were God's visible people before the flood, with the wicked daughters of Cain, is given as the great cause of that exceeding corruption, which provoked God to destroy the old world with the flood. The marriage of Esau with the daughters of Heth was a great grief to the minds of his pious parents, and sensible of the danger of such a connexion, they took special care that Jacob should not unite himself with any of the Canaanitish women. God expressly prohibited the Israelites intermarrying with the Heathen ; and the transgression of this law, brought frequent judgments on the nation. Solomon's marriages with Heathen women were productive of great evil both to himself and his people. And doubtless, observation and experience, in the different ages of the church, have often proved the impropriety of such marriages.

Marriage should be between only two persons. Polygamy is unlawful. On this subject, in our country, much need not be said. Polygamy always has been and still is practised in the East. But that it is wrong we are taught by the original institution of marriage, which was between only one pair. And our Saviour referring to the original institution, says, " have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female ; and said for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh ? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh." Mat. xix. 4, 5, 6. And the apostle Paul in the frequent references which he makes to the conjugal relation, uniformly speaks of it as existing between one man and one woman. And the domestic evils which polygamy has occasioned is an evidence of its impropriety, as we see especially exemplified in the families of Abraham, Jacob, and Elkanah.

It is true polygamy was practised by good men of old, as those whose names have just been mentioned, and also

David, Solomon, and others; and we do not find that the Lord censured them for it. Hence some have been ready to conclude that polygamy is not in itself unlawful. But we may rather suppose that this was one of the imperfections of those good men, which the sacred historians faithfully record, not for imitation, but to give a faithful narrative, and rather to warn, than to hold up examples for imitation.

We proceed to what was principally intended in this discourse, viz. to point out the duties which arise out of this relation. Some of these are mutual, or common to both parties, and some are peculiar, to one or the other.

I. Let us attend to those duties which are *mutual.*

1. It is the duty of married persons mutually to *love* each other above all other persons. The Scriptures frequently teach and enjoin this duty in the marriage relation, as in the following passages. "And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." Gen. ii. 23, 24. "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe, and be thou ravished always with her love." Prov. v. 18, 19. And the apostle Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians, repeatedly enjoins love in the marriage relation, and compares it to the love which exists between Christ and his church.—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh." Eph. v, 25, &c. In these passages love is particularly enjoined upon the husband; but the duty is undoubtedly mutual. And from the preceding texts it is evident, that love between the parties in the marriage relation, ought to be greater than they bear to any other persons whatever. If a person is to leave father and mother and cleave unto his partner; if the parties are no more twain but one flesh; if their love is to be

like that which exists between Christ and his church; and if they are to love one another as their own bodies and their own flesh—undoubtedly it must be their duty to love one another above all other persons.

True conjugal love is something very different from mere sensual passion. The latter persons may have for each other, when there is no real affection. And this we have reason to fear, is the whole of the love, which many persons, who appear to be warmly attached, have for each other, before marriage. Where this is the sole or chief foundation of love, it cannot long continue. And this is undoubtedly one cause why we see so many unhappy after marriage, who before appeared to be extravagantly fond of each other. Their fondness had no higher foundation than sensual passion. True love is rational, and has esteem for its basis. We want a friend in the married state. And one who, if he or she were not related to us, we could not, on intimate acquaintance, esteem as a friend, is not likely to secure our affections, and make us happy in the married state. This remark is certainly very important and ought to be duly attended to in the choice of a partner for life.

A few lines from the celebrated Young in his Night Thoughts, aptly express the sentiment I wish to convey on this subject.

> ——————" The bosom of a friend
> Where heart meets heart reciprocally soft,
> Each other's pillow to repose divine.
> Beware the counterfeit; in passions flame
> Hearts melt; but melt like ice; soon harder froze,
> True love strikes root in reason; passion's foe."

If then, my hearers, you would be happy in the married state, let reason and not passion be your guide in the choice of a partner for life. And if you would fulfil the duties of this relation, ever mutually and sincerely love one another above all other persons. Whoever in the married state does not this, comes short of his duty; and much more do they come short of their duty and commit sin, who hate their partners, and spend their lives in contention and discord, or even in indifference.

2. Another mutual duty in the married state is *fidelity* towards each other. This is frequently enjoined in the word of God; and the violation of this duty is very frequently and severely reprehended, and declared to be very offensive to God. And our Saviour makes it a sufficient ground on which for the innocent party to sue for and obtain a divorce.

3. Another important duty incumbent on both parties in this relation is mutual *patience and forbearance* towards each other, under the various infirmities and weaknesses to which human nature is subject in its present fallen state. Human nature in its present state is at best but imperfect. And whatever ideas young persons may form of the perfection of the objects of their choice and affections, a more intimate acquaintance to which marriage introduces them, will soon teach them that their partners are no more than human, subject to the infirmities incident to human nature. And the erroneous opinions which persons sometimes form of the perfection of the objects of their choice, are often the cause of domestic unhappiness after marriage, when they find their expectations disappointed. If we would fulfil the duties, and enjoy the happiness of the marriage relation, we must not look for perfection in our partners; and we must make allowances for the weaknesses of human nature, and bear with each others infirmities. In no relation is the exercise of that charity which the Scriptures describe and inculcate, more important than this. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind —is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil—beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; charity never faileth." 1. Cor. xiii. 4. &c.— "Charity shall cover the multitude of sins." 1. Pet. iv. 8. The exercise of this charity in both parties will produce domestic tranquility, and generally, if practised only by one, will do the same; and perhaps will always with the worst of partners make things better than they otherwise would be. And it is the want of this charity in exercise, that impairs the domestic happiness of a great many, and renders many persons wretched through life. Amidst the numerous occurrences of domestic life, circumstances will arise to ruffle the temper. When this is the case with either party, soft words in the other might turn away anger, and prevent a vast deal of domestic mischief; when

finding fault and reproving while in this state, most frequently increases irritation, and after a time issues in a want of confidence, and constant coolness, and domestic broils. It seldom happens where persons are unhappy in the married state, that either party is entirely innocent, although one may be more to blame than the other; for it is certain as a general rule, however one party may fail in his or her duty, if the other has prudence, and bears with these failings in meekness and patience as the law of God directs, and to these adds a uniform and loving behaviour, things may for the most part be kept in a tolerable way; and not unfrequently the temper of the offending party may be overcome, or moderated, and sometimes an entire reformation be effected. I know there may be exceptions to this rule; for there are some monsters in human form, whom no kindness or prudence can soften or reclaim; but such instances are probably rare indeed.

4. Another mutual duty in the married state is, that husband and wife should be *helpful* to each other. The Lord made Eve to be an help-meet for Adam. Man and wife have such an intimate connexion, that according to the word of God, they are no more twain, but one flesh.—They ought therefore certainly to be mutually helpful to each other. They ought to help bear each others burdens, and thus they will be greatly lightened. They ought to have but one interest, and mutually to promote this. They ought to endeavour to defend and advance each others honour and character. They ought to be bosom friends, and merit and maintain a mutual confidence in each other. And they ought to participate in each others joys and sorrows, to sympathize with each other, to rejoice together, and to mourn together.

And here we may observe that either husband or wife who wants frugality, economy, or care, or is indolent, or squanders away property to the injury of the other party and their common family, is guilty of a gross violation of this relation, and is highly criminal in the sight of God.—For "if any provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." 1 Tim. v. 8.

5. Another mutual duty in the married state is, that husband and wife should endeavour to *promote* each other's *spiritual and eternal good.* We are bound to do good unto

others; and as the soul is of incomparably more importance than the body, it is our duty to endeavour to do good to the souls of others; and if it be our duty to endeavour to promote as far as in us lies the salvation of the souls of others, undoubtedly it must be still more our duty diligently to endeavour to be the instruments of good to the souls of those who sustain such an intimate and dear connexion with us as is formed by marriage. Besides, by promoting each others spiritual interests, we will best secure domestic and temporal felicity. The duty of endeavouring to promote each others spiritual and eternal good is taught in the following texts. 1. Cor. vii. 14, 16. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" And 1. Pet. iii. 1, 2, 7. "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Likewise ye husbands dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." If they both be pious, they ought frequently to converse together about the things of religion, and endeavour to instruct and quicken one another; and they ought to pray with and for each other. If one party be careless, the other ought to endeavour prudently and affectionately to speak to them of their situation, and exhort them to newness of life; to maintain a godly example before them; and to pray earnestly to God for their salvation. But alas! brethren, have we not reason to fear that most husbands and wives are criminally deficient in this article of duty?

II. We proceed to *peculiar* duties. Nature and the Scriptures give a certain *authority* to the husband. His peculiar duties may be summed up in the proper exercise of this authority. In every society, it is necessary to its well-being, that there be some head. In the domestic society, the man is constituted the head. This superiority he has from nature. For he was created first, and the woman was made to be an help-meet for him. This ar-

gument is used by the apostle Paul, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve." 1 Tim. ii. 12. 13. "The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." 1 Cor. xi. 8, 9. Nature also teaches the same, by the superior strength and courage which the man possesses which indicate that he should be the head. Alluding to this the apostle Peter (1 Pet. iii. 7.) calls the woman "the weaker vessel." But the Scriptures are full and express on this head. In the sentence which was pronounced upon the woman after the fall, God told her, "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall *rule* over thee." Gen. iii. 16. In Paul's Epistles we read, 1 Cor. xi. 3. "The head of every man is Christ, and the *head* of the woman is the man." 1 Cor. xiv. 34. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under *obedience*, as also saith the law."—Eph. v. 22, 23, 24, 33. "Wives *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is the *head* of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she *reverence* her husband." Tit. ii. 3, 4. "That they may teach the young women to be *obedient* to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." And in our text, "wives *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord." To the same purpose Peter speaks, 1 Pet. iii. 1—6. "Likewise, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands, that if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with *fear*: whose adorning &c. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in *subjection* unto their own husbands; even as Sara *obeyed* Abraham, calling him *lord*."

This authority of the husband, he is to exercise for the good of the wife. Love to her is to be the governing principle. Hence it is that the whole of his duties are so

frequently summed up in love ; as in our text, " husbands *love* your wives, and be *not bitter* against them." His authority is by no means that of a master over a slave, as many husbands practically suppose ; nor is it that of a father over his child ; but as the Scriptures represent, it is like that of the head over the members, and of Christ over his church. He is to remember that she is his own flesh, or as it were a part of himself; and it becomes him ever to treat her as such ; to treat her as his companion, to exercise his government with meekness, love, and wisdom ; to conduct towards her with tenderness ; and to nourish and cherish her and supply her wants.

The peculiar duties of wives are in our text summed up in submission ; " Wives *submit* yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord." The same duty as we have seen from texts already quoted is frequently enjoined. It is the duty of the wife to respect the authority of the husband, and cheerfully submit to it as commanded by God himself. Nor is she to do this from servile fear, as the slave does to his master ; but out of love, and respect to her husband, as the church obeys Christ. She ought to be careful to please him, and to endeavour to promote his interest, honour and happiness ; for in so doing she will best promote her own.

Husband and wife thus living together, and fulfilling their duty towards each other according to the word of God, will make each other happy. And it is the transgression of the laws of God respecting the duties of this relation that makes so many married people unhappy ; or that at least impairs the happiness which they otherwise might enjoy in this relation. If the man rules with capriciousness, or without that high love directing all his conduct, which the Scriptures require, or is bitter against his wife, or tyrannizes over her, he greatly transgresses : or if the woman usurps authority over the man, or refuses to submit to his lawful authority, she greatly transgresses. And if she succeed in establishing her authority she not only sins ; but she generally, if not always, lessens her husband's respectability, and with it her own ; and having obtained her end, she most generally despises him for his weakness. The way for a wife to support her own respectability and happiness, is, to support and cheerfully submit to the authority of her husband ; and in so

doing she will generally acquire such an influence over her husband, as will lead him to act according to her wishes. But she is bound to submit only in the Lord. When her husband requires her to break the law of God, or prohibits her from doing those things which God commands, she is to obey God rather than her husband, and trust consequences with him; for the authority of God is paramount to every other.

Thus I have endeavoured to point out the duties of the marriage relation, as they are taught by reason and the word of God. Let us in view of this subject, be humbled if we have come short of our duty, and repent, that we may obtain the remission of these as well as other sins. Let us take the word of God as our rule, and set ourselves implicitly to follow its directions; and then we shall have happy families, and enjoy that felicity which the married state is eminently calculated to afford.

SERMON LXXIV.

DUTIES OF MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

EPHESIANS VI. 5—9.

"*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ: Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*"

The relation of *master* and *servant* has existed in society from the earliest ages of the world. A servant is one, who in a family, is under the authority of a master, and owes

him subjection and obedience. Persons may be brought into this state of subjection in several ways. Some become servants by voluntary compact or agreement. Being originally free, they either indent themselves, or are bound by their parents for a certain term of years, to do a certain service, that they may receive a certain benefit. Such are apprentices. Some become servants by hiring themselves a certain time, for a certain compensation. Others again, through poverty, have become servants, by selling themselves, or being sold by their parents for support. And, in some nations, persons have been sold against their will. In this way persons sometimes became servants among the Jews. For the Mosaic law contained rules for the treatment of such servants. As we read, Lev. xxv. 39, 40 ; "If thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee ; thou shalt not compel him to serve thee as a bond-servant : but as an hired servant, and as a sojourner he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of Jubilee." That this custom, of reducing persons to servitude for debt, was practised among the Jews, we further learn, from a fact, stated 2 Kings iv. 1. "There cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, thy servant my husband is dead ; and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bond-men." And also from one of the parables of our Saviour ; Mat. xviii : In which the servant who owed ten thousand talents, and had nothing to pay, was commanded to be sold, with his wife and children to make payment.

Again, liberty is sometimes forfeited, and persons are reduced to a state of servitude, as a punishment for crimes committed by them. Another way in which persons become servants, is by captivity in war. In ancient times, it was a general practice, when prisoners of war were not put to death, to make slaves of them. Barbarous nations still continue the practice ; but among civilized nations, under the light of Christianity, this mode of making slaves is not tolerated.

Another way in which persons are brought into a state of servitude is, invading by force, and without provocation, the territories of an independent power, and seizing upon its inhabitants, and carrying them away captive ; or alluring them away under the mask of peace and friend-

ship, and thus reducing them and their posterity to perpetual slavery. In this way have many, now in our own country become slaves. Avarice may make pleas to justify this mode of making slaves; but both reason and the word of God condemn it. The slave trade by which slavery was introduced into this country, is an exceedingly wicked practice. The origin of the slavery which is found in this country is altogether wrong, and indefensible. But when persons are found to be in this state without the act of their present owners, it is more difficult to say what is duty. On this subject, I shall not in this place, at present express an opinion. The relation of master and servant does exist, and from whatever cause this relation may arise, the Scriptures point out the duties of those who sustain this relation. Our object at present is to ascertain these duties.

I. As *servants* are first mentioned in the text, let us first attend to their *duties*. And let it be kept in mind, that by servants are meant, all who are under subjection to another as a master, whatever the means may have been, by which they were brought into this subjection.

1. It is the duty of servants to be *obedient* to their masters. This is enjoined in the text: "Servants, be obedident to them that are your masters according to the flesh." The same duty is enjoined in the following texts: "Servants obey in all things your masters according to the flesh;" Col. iii. 22: "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things;" Tit. ii. 9.

And here I would observe, that in masters, mistresses are included, and that servants owe to them the same duties as to masters; and that the duties which are binding on masters towards their servants are also binding on mistresses; and that when in this discourse we use the word master, we mean mistresses also.

Servants owe to their masters obedience. This obedience they should render from a regard to the authority of God, who has in his word pointed out the duties of those in this station, and who in his providence has permitted them to be brought into this condition, and has thereby signified his pleasure, that they should fulfil the duties of this station.

These are reasons why they should obey even unrea-

sonable and tyrannical masters. Such masters commit sin, and for their sin they must render an account to him, who is their master in heaven; but the sin of masters will not justify the disobedience of servants.

This obedience should be performed, as enjoined in our text, "in singleness of heart;" that is with a single desire and aim to please Christ, whom they obey, in conscientiously obeying, from a regard to the divine authority, their earthly masters. This obedience should also be performed, not with reluctance, but as enjoined in our text, cheerfully, because it is the will of God; "With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." Again, this obedience should be performed, not only in the presence of their masters, or when under their inspection; but also in their absence. The command in our text is: "Not with eye service, as men-pleasers." Many servants watch the eyes of their masters, and as soon as they are out of their sight, prove unfaithful and disobedient. Christian servants ought not to act thus. Such conduct is forbidden by God, and is very displeasing to him, whose eye is always upon them. Again the obedience which it is the duty of servants to render to their masters ought to be performed without gainsaying, contradicting, or opposing their commands; and without muttering, or talking back with ill temper, when reproved; as we read; Tit. ii. 9, 16; "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters—not answering again."

2. Another duty of servants to their masters, is *honour*. They ought to respect them, because they are their masters, placed in the providence of God, in a superior station, and over them. They ought to think and speak respectfully of them, and so conduct, as not to disgrace them by their connexion with them. This duty is taught in our text: "Servants be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling." And also in the following passages of Scripture; "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;" 1 Pet. ii. 18. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God, and his doctrine be not blasphemed;" 1 Tim. vi. 1. This was the direction to Christian servants, who had Heathen masters. Even in that case, they were

to honour them as their masters, and to count them worthy of all honour. The apostle then, in the next verse gave directions to those Christian servants, who had believing masters. "They that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit;" 1 Tim. vi. 2. The apostle supposed that some servants might conclude, that because their masters were brethren with them in Christ, they were therefore on an equality with them, and did not owe them respect and obedience. Such a conclusion he forbids, and teaches that therefore they were the *rather* to do them service. Because they were brethren in Christ, they owed them, instead of diminished, increased respect and obedience.

3. Another duty which servants owe their masters is *faithfulness*. Eye-service is forbidden in our text. And servants are commanded, Tit. ii. 10: "Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity." Eleazer when he served Abraham, Jacob when he served Laban, and Joseph when he served Potiphar were examples of fidelity. Our Saviour also taught this duty in one of his parables; Mat. xxiv. 45, &c.: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household. Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh shall find so doing. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart my lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder. and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites."

It is the duty of servants faithfully to attend to the business of their master, with diligence execute his commands, be careful of the interests committed to them, and not suffer things to be wasted through their indolence or carelessness. They ought to make their master's interest their own; and to pursue it and take care of it as such. And this they ought to do not only when their master's eye is upon them, but at all times. Such are good servants, and the conduct of such is well-pleasing to God. But we have reason to fear, there are comparatively few such servants. Idleness in a master's absence, opposition

or indifference to his interest, carelessness about what belongs to him, suffering it to be wasted, and purloining or pilfering or stealing something that is his, or knowing that others do so and concealing it—these, we have reason to fear, are sins of which many servants are guilty; and for these sins unless they repent and reform, God will one day punish them.

4. Another duty which servants owe their masters is *patience* under their *corrections*, both when they deserve correction and when they do not. It is the duty of servants, when they have received deserved correction, patiently to submit to it; and be sorry for their faults which have made correction needful, and do so no more. And when they have received correction undeservedly, as is sometimes the case, it is their duty to be submissive, and not be impudent to their masters, or rise up in opposition to their authority to take revenge. There is a legal way of redress, in case of injurious treatment, which a servant is undoubtedly authorized to seek. But in case he cannot obtain redress in an orderly and regular manner, it is his duty to commit his cause to God, who has said, "Vengeance is mine I will repay;" Rom. xii. 19; and patiently to bear the corrections which in his providence, he suffers to be laid upon him, and to improve them for his spiritual and eternal good. That this is his duty is clearly proved by the following passage: 1 Pet. ii. 18—20; "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

II. I proceed to point out the *duties* of *masters*. The command in our text is: "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him. By the command, "do the same things unto them," we are to understand an injunction to perform correspondent duties, and that masters should act towards their servants from the same principles, viz. a regard to the divine authority, and as accountable to God.

1. It is the duty of masters to be *reasonable* in their commands, and to require nothing of their servants; but what is right. Masters ought to remember that their servants have human nature as well as themselves, and are descended from the same original, though in the overruling providence of God, they are placed in an inferior condition in society. As said Job, when protesting his integrity: "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth what shall I answer him? Did not he that made me make him? And did not one fashion us?" Job xxxi. 13,—15. They ought not to require more service from them, than they are able to perform. And they ought not to impose upon them any commands contrary to the law of God. If they do, servants are not bound to obey; for the authority of God is paramount to every other; and in this as in every other, the inferior is bound to obey only in the Lord. A good rule, in every condition and relation in life, is to do to others, as we would have them, were we in their situation and they in ours, to do to us.

2. Masters ought to *provide* things necessary for the comfort of their servants. The direction of the apostle Paul is, "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a master in heaven;" Col. iv. 1. On this head there are two extremes to be avoided. The one is an over delicate treatment and provision. Experience has proved this to be dangerous and wrong. Hence the wise man cautions against it: "He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child shall have him become his son at length;" Prov. xxix. 21. The other extreme is neglect; leaving them to suffer for want of necessary provision, or apparel, or attention and medicine in sickness.

3. Masters ought as our text enjoins to *forbear threatening*. By this we are not to understand, that masters are never to threaten their servants; for this is a part of that salutary discipline, which is sometimes necessary. The word "forbearing" in the text signifies moderating; and the object of the command is, to restrain those violent, furious, and terrifying threats, which are the product of unbridled passion.

4. Masters ought when necessary, and when servants are in such a sense under their authority as to render it proper, to *correct* them. The best good of the servant ought to be sought; and when other means fail to lead him to do his duty, the rod of correction ought to be used. But the good of the servant ought always to be the rule in administering correction. Masters ought never to correct in a passion; nor ought they to correct to take revenge and gratify passion. Correction, which ought always to be with humanity, may, if administered under the influence of passion, be cruel. Some persons never correct, unless they are in a passion. Such persons are certainly wrong; and their corrections are not likely to do much, if any good.

5. Masters should allow servants when they are accused of doing wrong, *liberty* to *plead*, and if they can, to *prove* their *innocency*. Job in solemnly protesting his integrity, mentioned this among other things: "If I did despise the cause of my man-servant, or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me;" Job. xxxi. 13. If servants are not guilty, they do not deserve correction. Neither will correction answer any good purpose; for the end of correction is to convince of the evil of a fault, and to lead a person to do so no more.

6. With respect to hired servants, it is the duty of masters fully and punctually to *pay* them their *wages*. Hear the word of the Lord on this head: "Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant; at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the Lord, and it be sin unto thee;" Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. And again: "Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth;" Jam. v. 4.

7. Another very important duty of masters towards servants is, the *care of their souls*. Servants have souls equally valuable with those of their masters. And for the manner in which they have acted towards these souls, must masters one day give a solemn account to their master in heaven. It is important that masters should be impressed with a solemn sense of their responsibility in this

respect, and set themselves faithfully to perform their duty. Thus Abraham did. "I know him (said the Lord) that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." Gen. xviii. 19. And thus also Joshua did. "As for me and my house (said he) we will serve the Lord." Josh. xxiv. 15.

In exercising due religious care over servants, several particular duties are incumbent. It is the duty of christian masters to dedicate the servants which belong to them, unto God in baptism; and thus to bind themselves to God and his church, for the performance of their duty towards them; and that their servants may become interested in those blessings which are connected with a visible relation to the church of Christ. In proof of this duty you are referred to the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the pattern of believers. He put the sign of circumcision, which was then the seal of the righteousness of faith, not only upon his sons; but also upon all the males that were born in his house, and that were bought with his money. And christian masters are equally bound now to have them baptised, as Abraham was of old to have them circumcised. Many christians in many parts of the church do feel their obligations in this respect and do perform this duty; and we have had some instances of it among ourselves, though many neglect it.

Again, it is the duty of masters to give their servants religious instruction, and to give them opportunities to gain such instruction. They ought to be taught to read, that they may read the word of God for themselves. And they ought to be instructed in the great principles of the christian religion. And when they manifest a disposition, they ought to be allowed a reasonable time, and suitable opportunities to enable them to gain religious instruction. And here I would remark that the present generation enjoy opportunities to acquire knowledge and gain religious instruction, which those who have lived before them have not enjoyed. I have reference particularly to Sabbath Schools. It is the duty of servants who have the liberty, to attend these schools. And it is the duty of masters to give them the liberty; and further, if necessary, to exercise their authority to cause them to attend upon this important means of instruction.

Again it is the duty of masters to set a good example before their servants; and to recommend religion to them by their example. The influence of example is great, and without this the best instructions will probably be lost.

Again it is the duty of masters to give their servants time and opportunity to attend upon the means of grace; and to see that they do attend upon them. They ought to be allowed and required to attend upon the public worship of God's house, and not to be detained except in cases of necessity. They ought also to require them to attend upon family worship. And it is their duty to restrain them from violations of the Sabbath day. In this respect, many masters are very guilty; for the Sabbath is kept by their Servants as a holiday. Masters who allow this, or who do not take the measures in their power to prevent it, are very guilty in the sight of God; and will have a sad account to render to their master in heaven when he comes to reckon with them. Besides masters will and do suffer in their temporal interests for these things. Nothing more effectually tends to destroy every moral principle, and therefore to make servants unfaithful than Sabbath-breaking. Let masters be exhorted as they regard their own temporal interests, and as they would not have the blood of their souls laid to their charge in the great day of account, to require their servants to abstain from the profanation of the Sabbath, and outwardly to respect and observe its institutions.

Once more, it is the duty of masters to pray for their servants. All other attempts for their spiritual and eternal good, ought to be followed with prayer to God for his blessing, to render the means used, effectual to their everlasting salvation.

From this subject we learn that the christian religion is excellent, and calculated to promote human happiness.—If servants were to perform their duty, and masters their's as enjoined in the Scriptures, they would mutually promote each other's happiness. God who has given such a law, so calculated to promote the happiness of his creatures, must be good, and worthy to be loved and obeyed. And the religion which is calculated to make persons good and happy in the several stations and relations of life, must be excellent, and is worthy to be embraced by all.

Let servants suffer this discourse to have its due effect upon their minds. Study to become acquainted with the duties of your station, as they are taught in the word of God; and conscientiously endeavour to perform them, as to the Lord. If you expect God's favour, you must be obedient to his commands. If you have but little committed to you, be faithful in that little, "knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." Remember that you have immortal souls; and let the care of these be your great concern. And remember that one, and an important part of true religion is, to be faithful, in the performance of the duties of the station in which you are placed, and the relations you bear to others.

And let masters remember, that they are accountable to one, who is their master in heaven for the performance of their duty in this as well as every other relation. Let them study to know their duty, and set themselves to perform it. Let them be humbled for past sins in this respect, and reform. And let them especially ever maintain a deep sense of the value of the souls of their servants; and by every means which God has made it their duty to use, endeavour to effect their eternal salvation.—AMEN.

SERMON LXXV.

DUTIES OF RULERS AND RULED.

ROMANS XIII. 1.

"*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God.*"

Civil government is a divine ordinance, designed for the good of mankind. Man is a social creature. He therefore naturally associates with his fellow-man. This he

does, not only from necessity, for mutual help and protection; but also from a natural love to society. And if it is agreeable to human nature, that men should associate with each other, laws are evidently necessary to enable them to live together, with any tolerable degree of happiness in society. For man is a depraved creature, and selfishness naturally predominates in his heart. Laws are therefore necessary, to regulate and restrain the selfish passions of men, preserve order in society, protect the rights of its several members, and promote the good of the whole. Even in the most virtuous civil communities, composed of such a race as ours, laws must be necessary to restrain and punish the wicked, and to decide disputes which from the blindness, prejudice, and selfishness of human nature, in even the best of men, will arise in society. And if laws are necessary, it is necessary they should be made and administered, and therefore that there should be rulers and consequently ruled. Hence, the relation of rulers and ruled arises out of the nature of man; and therefore civil government is an ordinance of God, who is as much the author of all those good institutions, which arise out of the nature of things, as he is of those for which there is his positive command.

Besides the Scriptures expressly ascribe the origin of civil government to God. This is done in our text. "There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." The same is repeatedly taught in several verses following our text. "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. He is the minister of God to thee for good. He is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. They are God's ministers." Elsewhere we are taught the same truth, as in the following passages. "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles even all the judges of the earth;" Prov. viii. 15, 16. "He removeth kings, and setteth up kings;" Dan. ii. 21. "The most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will;" Dan. iv. 32. "Governors are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well;" 1 Pet. ii. 14. From these texts it fully appears that civil government is of divine appointment. But we are not to suppose that any particular form was divinely appointed, to

be obligatory on all communities, to the exclusion of all other forms.

The different simple forms of civil government are three viz. Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy. There are different modifications of these ; and there are other mixed forms, which combine something of some or of all the simple forms. It does not properly belong to a sermon, to enter into an explanation of the nature of these different forms, and point out their respective advantages and disadvantages; or to answer the inquiry, which is the best ? On this last point I would just observe from a variety of circumstances, the genius of nations may differ so much, that what would be best for one people, may not be best for another. However, we believe a mixed form, composed of all the three simple forms, well tempered, is in itself the best, and the most likely to promote the great ends of government—general and individual happiness. But notwithstanding this, it may be further observed, that the government which is best administered, best promotes general and individual happiness.

Civil government is necessary for the good of man, is calculated to promote his happiness, and was instituted by God for his benefit. But this institution has often been abused, and in the hands of wicked rulers, has often proved an engine of very great oppression and cruelty. But this has arisen, not from government in itself being evil; but, through the depravity of human nature, from the abuse of that which is in itself good, and eminently calculated to promote general and individual happiness. And if *rulers* and *ruled* were mutually to perform their respective duties, government would greatly promote human happiness.

Let us attend to these duties.

I. Of *rulers.* Although the duties of rulers are not stated in our text; yet they are undoubtedly implied ; for relative duties are mutual. If it is the duty of the people to be subject to the powers that be, it is equally the duty of rulers to exercise their authority aright. Their duties we may learn in detail from other parts of Scripture.

In general, it is their duty to exercise the authority, with which they are vested, for the good of the people over which they are placed. To do this they ought to

love their people. This duty is frequently set forth in Scripture by the figurative titles which are given them. They are called heads of the body politick, of which the people are members. They are called fathers, and of course their people are considered as children. And they are also called shepherds. These titles undoubtedly teach, that there is an intimate union between rulers and ruled, and that the former ought to feel a tender regard for the good of the latter. And they ought always in the exercise of their offices to be ruled by this principle. Hence, rulers, who make their supreme object, self-aggrandizement, either in exalting their name by schemes of ambition, expensive and disastrous to their people; or in increasing their property, by bribery, peculation, or oppression, do not discharge their duty, but on the contrary sin against God. The prophet Ezekiel spake of this principle of self-aggrandizement actuating rulers, as one of the grievous sins of the Jews, which provoked God to send desolating judgments upon the nation. "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain." Ez. xxii. 27. And Moses in the choice of rulers was directed to select men, "hating covetousness." Ex. xviii. 21.

But self-aggrandizement, and not the public welfare, has doubtless often been the object of men, in seeking and accepting offices, even to the supplanting by their mean and wicked arts, others who acted from principle, and filled their stations with wisdom, diligence and fidelity.—This principle of regard to the public good, and not private aggrandizement, ought to influence public officers, in every department of state, whether legislative, executive, or judiciary. Actuated by this principle, they ought to frame wise and good laws, and to administer them with fidelity and equity.

What a ruler ought to be, we are informed in the Scriptures. The advice of Jethro to Moses, with which advice, this great and divinely inspired lawgiver complied, was, "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." Ex. xviii. 21.

From this text we learn, that *ability* or *wisdom* is one im-

portant trait in the character of a good ruler. The necessity of this qualification to fit a person to be a ruler, especially in the higher and more important and difficult offices of state, must appear to every intelligent person. The duties which rulers have frequently to perform are complicated and difficult, and therefore require an accurate knowledge of the springs of government, and of the operation of causes under all their variety of circumstances, as they have existed in other ages, and nations of the world; and it is a great mistake that every honest man is fit to be a ruler, and to fill the important offices of state. Honesty or integrity is an important and necessary qualification; but there are other qualifications equally important and necessary. If a ruler be weak or ignorant, however honest he may be, he is not fit to fill the offices of government. On this point the saying of the wise man is applicable. "Wo to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." Eccl. x. 16. This wo must be pronounced on account of the incapacity of a child. Many who are grown to years of maturity are children in knowledge, and equally incapable of governing.

Another qualification of a good ruler is, that he *fears God.* This we have seen from the text already quoted from Exodus. "Thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men, such as *fear God.*" The same is taught in other passages. David said—"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear God." 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. And in the history of the pious king Jehoshaphat we find that in appointing officers under him, he followed this rule. "He set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah. And said to the Judges, take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment. Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you: take heed and do it. And he charged them, saying, thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a perfect heart." 2 Chron. xix. 5—9. The importance of rulers being actuated by the fear of God, further appears from the duties which the Scriptures enjoin upon them, to the right performance of which, the fear of God is requisite. And the same is proved by the history of nations, which have enjoyed the light of revelation; and

especially by the history of the nations of Judah and Israel. We uniformly find in these nations, that when their rulers feared God, things generally went well, and the people were prosperous and happy. But when the rulers, and especially the supreme rulers were wicked, vice was gradually diffused among all orders of the people; the nation declined in prosperity; and oftentimes severely suffered. Agreeably to this the Psalmist remarked: "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted;" Ps. xii. 8.

Again, as we learn from the text quoted from Exodus, rulers ought to be "men of *truth*, *hating covetousness*." That is, men of fidelity, actuated by a sincere fear of God, and regard to the public welfare; and not, while they make good professions, by an ambitious and covetous desire to aggrandize themselves. Such are the qualifications which, according to the Scriptures, rulers ought to possess.

The Scriptures also inform us what are the duties of their station.

Both in making and administering laws, it is their duty to be a *terror* to *evil-doers*, and for the *praise* of such as *do well*. Prov. xx. 26, we read; "A wise king scattereth the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them." Also 1 Pet. ii. 14; "Unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." And in the chapter from which our text is taken; "Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." From these texts it is evident, that it is the duty of rulers to discountenance and punish the wicked, and to encourage the good. This they may and ought to do by enacting laws against vice: by setting themselves a virtuous example; and by exercising their authority for the encouragement and protection of the virtuous, and the discountenancing and punishment of the wicked.

Again, in administering the laws, rulers ought to *do strict justice* impartially, without respect of persons; and especially they ought to attend to the cause of the poor

when they are oppressed. This is frequently enjoined in the Scriptures; as in the following passages. I charged your judges at that time, saying, hear the causes between your brethren; and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's;" Deut. i. 16, 17. "Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee; and they shall judge the people with just judgment. Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift;" Deut. xvi. 18, 19. "If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked;" Deut. xxv. 1. "How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy: deliver the poor and the needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked;" Ps. lxxxii. 1—3.

Again, the Scriptures teach that rulers should be *diligent* in the discharge of the duties of their office. Of this we have a proof in our context. "They are God's ministers, attending *continually* upon this very thing."

II. We proceed to consider the corresponding duties of *people* towards their rulers.

1. People ought to *desire* and *pray* for *good* rulers; and in a government like ours, where the rulers are chosen by the people, the latter ought to be careful to elect to office men who answer to the description of what the Scriptures declare rulers ought to be;—men who fear God, who will rule, feeling that they are God's ministers, and accountable to him for the faithful discharge of the duties of their office, whose characters are known, who have knowledge and wisdom to govern aright, who will not be diverted from what their judgment teaches to be the path of duty, by the love of gain, the fear of man, or desire of popular applause, who will not bear the civil sword in vain, but be a terror to evil-doers and a praise to such as do well, and who will devote themselves diligently to the duties of their office. Christians with the Bible in their hands, in which God has declared that ru-

lers ought to be such characters, certainly cannot doubt, that where they have the choice of rulers, they ought to seek for such characters, and when they can be found, conscientiously to give their suffrages to them.

But brethren have we not reason to fear that these evident christian duties are too little regarded, even by professing christians? And especially that the point whether a candidate for office fears God or not, is too little attended to? Is is not a fact that even christians frequently suffer party considerations to outweigh the will of God made known in his word? Many professed christians practically renounce the authority of God in civil affairs. Brethren these things ought not so to be.

2. Another duty of people is, to be *subject* unto the powers that be: to submit to the government of those in authority, and render a ready obedience to the laws. A good christian must be a good citizen, and an obedient subject. The command of God in our text is; "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers:" And in our context, we read; "Wherefore ye must needs be subject. Whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." And it is added, "They that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." And 1 Pet. ii. 13—15; it is commanded, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: Whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him. For so is the will of God."

The motive to this obedience should be a regard to the authority of God. We are to obey as rendering obedience to the Lord, and for conscience sake. This motive is mentioned in our text; "for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." Government is an ordinance of God. And hence the apostle draws the inference in a following verse: "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath; but also for conscience sake." And the apostle Peter enjoined, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake;" 1 Pet. ii. 13.

This obedience is to be rendered to the powers that be, whether the rulers are our choice or not. When in the providence of God, they are placed over us, we are, on christian principles, bound to be subject. And our obedience is to extend to every ordinance. Whether the

laws be such as we approve of or not; and even if they be oppressive, we are in duty bound to submit; and if we seek redress, seek it in a legal way. There is however one exception to this rule, and that is when rulers pass laws, violating the rights of conscience, and requiring us to break the laws of God. In such a case we are not bound to obey. But under pain of the displeasure of God, we are to obey him rather than man. The justness of these observations is evident from the Scriptures. That we are to be obedient even to bad rulers, in every thing that does not require us to break God's commandments is clear from our text. And it is remarkable that at the time the apostle commanded in the name of God, every christian to be subject to the higher powers, Nero, one of the most capricious and abandoned tyrants that ever disgraced the world, sat upon the throne of the Roman empire. And yet christians were directed under pain of the divine vengeance to submit to his decrees. But when this same tyrant commanded christians to renounce the religion of Jesus, and sacrifice to Heathen idols, this same apostle was one of the first to resist even unto blood, striving against sin; and to lay down his life rather than comply. Hence it is evident that, except when the rights of conscience are invaded, a man to be a good christian must render obedience to all the laws of his country. In transgressing any law of the land which does not require us to break God's commandments, we sin against him.

Another duty incumbent on a people in civil society is to *respect* and *honour* their rulers. This they ought to do on account of the office they bear. And the observance of this respect and honour is important to the good of the community; for if the persons of rulers are despised, their authority will be trampled on, and of course the miseries which arise from insubordination follow. Besides the Scriptures clearly teach this duty. Peter spake of those who transgressed in this particular as follows: "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished. But chiefly them that despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed: they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord;" 2 Pet.

ii. 9—11. And Jude spake of them as follows: "These filthy dreamers, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities;" Jud. 8.

4. Another duty of the people is cheerfully to *pay* the *taxes* which are levied for the support of government. If government is useful and necessary as has been shown, it must be supported. And this duty also is enjoined in the Scriptures. In the chapter which contains our text we read; "For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers attending continually on this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom." And our Saviour directed, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's;" Mat. xxii. 21. And he himself paid tribute when it was asked of him.

5. Once more it is the duty of the people to *pray* for their rulers, and to *thank* God for good rulers. The duties of those in authority are important and arduous, and divine assistance is necessary to enable them to discharge them aright. They therefore stand much in need of prayer. And civil government, when well administered, is such a great blessing as to claim our special thanksgivings to God for it. Agreeably to these remarks, Paul exhorted Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men: for kings and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;" 1 Tim. ii. 1—3.

In the conclusion of this discourse, let those among us who are in authority be exhorted to consider the duties incumbent on them according to the word of God; and their responsibility to God for the faithful discharge of these duties. And let the people be exhorted to consider their duties towards their rulers generally. And wherein any of us find that we have come short, or transgressed, let us be humbled, and ask the divine forgiveness; and let us set ourselves, for conscience sake, faithfully to discharge the duties which arise out of the relation we sustain in civil society.

And in view of this subject, I feel constrained to repeat a remark, made in some former discourses on the relative duties. How excellent is the religion of the Bi-

ble! It exhibits abundant internal evidences of its divine original. It aims at restraining those passions, and diverting from those courses, which naturally lead men to misery; and at directing men in those paths which are calculated to secure their happiness. If mankind were universally actuated by the precepts of the gospel, our world would be comparatively a paradise. Each one would then move in his proper station, and fulfil his part, for the promotion of the glory of God, each other's happiness, and the good of the whole. Surely such a religion must be divine. Let us believe it, embrace it with our whole hearts, and love it; and let our lives be conformed to its precepts.—AMEN.

SERMON LXXVI.

DUTIES OF MINISTERS AND PEOPLE.

1 THESSALONIANS v. 12, 13.

"*And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake.*"

We have considered man in domestic and civil society, and seen what are his relative duties in these situations. We come now to consider him as a member of religious or ecclesiastical society, and to point out his duties in this relation. God has been pleased to establish a church in our world. This church is divided into a great many particular societies. For these societies or particular churches, God has appointed that there should be officers. The principal and most important of these officers is the *minister*. To him are given in Scripture several different names, expressive of the several duties which he has to perform. He is called *minister*, because he serves Christ in his church. He is called *pastor*, because he feeds the flock of Christ with spiritual food. He is call-

ed *bishop* because he has the oversight of the flock. He is termed *presbyter* or elder, because it is his duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the people. He is called the *angel* of the church because he is the messenger of God. He is termed *ambassador*, as he is sent by God to treat with sinners. And he is named *steward* of the mysteries of God, as he dispenses his grace and ordinances.

From the institution of a church, and the appointment of this officer in the church, arises the relation of *minister* and *people*.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to point out the duties of this relation. And

I. The duties of *ministers* towards the people of their charge. These may be summed up in love, labour, discipline, example, and prayer.

1. It is the duty of ministers to *love* their people. They ought to feel a tender love for their souls, and an earnest desire to advance their spiritual interests. This duty is taught, 1 Thes. ii. 7, 8; where the Apostle speaking of himself, and his fellow ministers, says, "We were gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." Thus ought every minister of the gospel to feel towards the people of his charge. This principle in exercise will be the best security, for the faithful discharge of all the duties which he owes to his people. But the want of this principle, while it will render him very criminal in the sight of God, will make his business a drudgery, and will almost certainly lead him to neglect many of his duties.

2. It is the duty of ministers to *labour* among their people, and diligently perform all those services, which belong to them as ministers of Christ, and pastors of a flock. This duty is taught in our text, "We beseech you brethren, to know them which *labour* among you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." The labour or work of a minister comprises several particular duties, such as preaching the word, administration of ordinances, visitation of families and particularly of the sick, and catechising of the children and youth of his charge.

It is his duty to *preach* the word. This is the leading

and most important part of his work. The command of our Saviour to his apostles was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel;" Mark xvi. 15. And the direction of Paul to Timothy was, "preach the word;" 2 Tim. iv. 2. Preaching is a minister's leading duty, and he is to preach the *word*—the revealed word of God. He is to preach the gospel, that is, glad tidings to sinners through Jesus Christ. He ought with Paul, "not to know any thing among" his people in his preaching to them, "save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" 1 Cor. ii. 2. If he would do his people good, every sermon ought to have a bearing on Christ and him crucified, or grow out of this subject.

As to the manner in which he ought to perform this duty. He ought to be *diligent*. The command is, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season;" 2 Tim. iv. 2. A minister ought not to be content with merely preaching as often as may be customary on the Sabbath; but he ought gladly to embrace opportunities, to preach sometimes on other days, when his other ministerial avocations will permit. He ought to preach *plainly*, so that he may be easily understood by all his hearers. For in almost all congregations many are unlearned, and need great plainness of speech. "We use" said Paul to the Corinthians, "great plainness of speech;" 2 Cor. iii. 12. He ought to preach *faithfully*, making known to his people the whole counsel of God. Ministers are stewards of the mysteries of God," and "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful;" 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. He ought to preach *wisely*, adapting his discourses to the state and necessities of his people. Thus Paul exhorted Timothy; "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" 2 Tim. ii. 15. And he ought to preach *zealously*, and show that he is in earnest in his work. Thus it is said of Apollos, "being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord:" Acts xviii. 25.

Another important part of a minister's work in which it is his duty to labour among his people is to *administer* the *ordinances* of baptism and the Lord's supper unto those duly qualified to receive them. Thus when our Lord commissioned his apostles to preach, he also commission-

ed them to baptize; and we find them frequently engaged in breaking bread, and celebrating the Lord's supper, with the primitive christians.

Another part of their work in which it is their duty to labour, is, as far as may be consistent with other duties, to *visit* their people, and carry instruction and exhortation from house to house. This is a laborious, but it is an important part of ministerial duty, and has been often crowned with a divine blessing. Thus Peter and John daily not only in the temple, but in every house ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ; Acts v. 42. And Paul taught the Ephesians, not only publicly, but from house to house; Acts xx. 20. Especially ought ministers to visit the sick; as we read, James v. 14: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over them."

Another part of his work in which it is his duty to labour is the *catechetical instruction* of the children and youth of his congregation. The direction of Christ to Peter was, "feed my lambs;" John xxi. 15. The rising generation are the hope of the church. And it is of the utmost importance that they be well instructed, and no mode of instruction is better calculated to promote their spiritual good, or has been more crowned with the divine blessing among children and youth, than this.

Thus it is the duty of ministers to labour among their people, in preaching the word, in administering the ordinances, in visiting their people and especially the sick, and in catechising the children and youth. And to these and the other duties of their office, which relate to the church at large, and the general interests of religion, they ought to be devoted. They ought to follow the direction of Paul to Timothy: "Give thyself wholly to these things;" 1 Tim. iv. 15; and to take up the resolution of Paul with respect to the Corinthians;" I will very gladly spend and be spent for you;" 2 Cor. xii. 15.

3. It is the duty of a minister, in connexion with those who are appointed to be helps and governments in the church, to *exercise* a watchful *care* and *discipline* over the people of his charge. This duty is taught in the following clause of our text; "and are over you in the Lord, to admonish you." There is a spiritual authority given to tender-

ministers which it is their duty to exercise for the good of their people. It is their duty carefully to guard the sealing ordinances of the church; and in the admission of persons to them, to put a difference between the holy and profane, the clean and the unclean. And it is their duty to watch over those, who are within the pale of the church, and when they see them going astray to admonish, and endeavour to reclaim them; and also to exclude the scandalous from those privileges which they have forfeited by their crimes. The exercise of discipline is one of the most painful duties which ministers have to perform. But painful as it is, a minister, if he would be faithful to Christ and his people, must perform it. The good of those who so conduct as to deserve this discipline, requires it; as also does the good of the church and the cause of religion. For the continuance of scandalous members in the communion of the church, grieves the truly pious, encourages professors who have not the grace of God, to give a loose reign to their corrupt propensities, staggers and discourages the enquiring, emboldens the careless to reproach religion, and confirms them in their carelessness and wickedness. And I would hazard the assertion, that no particular church can continue long in a flourishing condition in the neglect of discipline. The truth of this assertion is confirmed by the nature of things, and by facts; and it is futher confirmed by the consideration that the duty of exercising discipline is most clearly taught and enjoined in the Scriptures; as in the following text among others. Our Saviour giving directions to his disciples, in the case of an offending member, concerning whom complaint was made to the church, said, "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Mat. xviii. 17. 18. And the apostle Paul in the verse following our text, exhorts, "warn them that are unruly." And he charged Timothy, "reprove, rebuke." 2 Tim. iv. 2. And again, "them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear." 1 Tim. v. 20. And in the same Epistle *speaking* of Hymeneus and Alexander, he says, "Whom I duly delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to commeme." And he directed the Corinthians with re-

spect to the incestuous member, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." Hence it is evident that it is the duty of ministers to exercise discipline among the people of their charge.

4. Another duty which a minister owes to his people, is to set an *example* of piety before them. He ought to preach to them by his example as well as by precept.—The influence of example is very great, and where a minister, even though his preaching be good, does not set a good example, his precepts will be likely to have little or no effect. He undoeth with one hand what he attempts to do with the other. This duty of a minister is plainly taught in the following charge of Paul to Timothy—"Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Tim. iv. 12. Ministers ought so to conduct before their people, that they can sincerely say to them, with Paul, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." 1 Cor. xi 1.

5. Another duty which ministers owe to their people is to *pray* for them; and this they ought to do, not only in the public assembly, but in their closets. This was the constant practice, of that bright example for a gospel minister, the apostle Paul. Thus to the Romans he writes—"God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always, in my prayers." Rom. i. 9. So also to the Ephesians, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Eph. i. 16. And to the Thessalonians, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers." 1 Thes. i. 2. Ministers are dependent on God to give success to their labours. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God must give the increase. Ministers ought to feel their dependence on God; and earnestly and perseveringly to seek his blessing to attend their labours. They ought daily to bear their people on their hearts at the throne of grace, and ask the blessing of God for them.

Having thus pointed out the duties of a minister towards his people, we proceed,

II. To point out the correspondent duties of the *people* towards their minister. The people have duties on their part as well as the minister. The duties of a people towards their minister may be summed up in love, tender-

ness of his character; attendance upon his ministrations, support of discipline and submission to it, maintenance, and prayer.

1. It is the duty of a people to love their minister. This duty is taught in our text—"Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." And also Gal. iv. 14, 15. where the Apostle, with commendation, bears testimony to the affection of the Galatians for him. "Ye received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." The ground of this love which a people ought to bear to their minister is the work in which he is engaged. He is an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and comes in his name. He ought therefore to be respected for his office; and he that thinks lightly of, and despises a minister of the gospel as such, lightly esteems and despises his Master in whose name he comes. Thus when Christ sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he said to them, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me." Luk. x. 16. The work in which ministers are engaged is the most important business in our world; for their work has for its end, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the salvation of immortal souls.—If people therefore ought to love the kingdom of Christ and their own souls, they ought to love their minister who is engaged in endeavouring to promote these important interests.

2. It is the duty of a people to *feel* and to *exercise* a tender *regard* for the *character* of their minister. Thus we read, "against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." 1 Tim. v. 19. Charity which is so often enjoined, and commended in the Scriptures; is here peculiarly a duty; and evil speaking which is so often condemned is here especially to be condemned; because the success of the cause of Christ is most intimately connected with the good name of the ministers of religion. These remarks are not intended to intimate that if a minister be guilty of scandalous crimes, they ought not to be noticed; but that people should not look for perfection in their minister, that they should cast the veil of charity over the imperfections inseparable from human nature,

that they should defend his character against false aspersions, that they should be slow to believe an ill report against him, and never do it but when well attested, and that then they should not spread it abroad unless the good of the church imperiously requires it.

3. It is the duty of a people to *attend* upon the *ministrations* of their minister. That this is duty is evident from the correspondent duties of the minister. If it is his duty to preach to his people, it is undoubtedly their duty to attend upon his preaching; and as the Apostle exhorts, not to forsake the assembling of themselves together.—Heb. x. 25. It is their duty to attend and hear the word when it is preached; and also to take heed how they hear, and to profit by what they hear. Hence they neglect the duty which they owe to their minister, as well as to their God, and their own souls, who seldom or never attend upon his preaching. And if it be the duty of a minister, as we have seen, to preach the word out of season as well as in season, or occasionally on other days of the week as well as statedly on the Sabbath, it must be the duty of a people when they are not necessarily prevented by the interference of other duties, to wait upon such occasional preaching; and people who are blessed with such opportunities, ought to esteem them a privilege and to prize and improve them. Again if it be the duty of a minister to administer gospel ordinances among his people, it is the duty of his people to prepare to receive these ordinances, and to wait on God in them. If it be his duty to carry instruction as far as practicable from house to house, it is their duty cordially to receive such visits, to require their families to attend upon them, and to listen to the instructions which are thus communicated. If it be his duty to visit the sick, it is their duty to send for him, and be ready to listen to instruction. And if it be his duty to catechise the children, it is the duty of parents to see that they are taught the catechism, and that they attend upon the catechetical instruction of the pastor.

4. Another duty which a people owe to their minister, is to *support* him in *maintaining* the *discipline* of the church, and meekly to *submit* to its due exercise. If it be his duty as we have shown it is, to reprove and rebuke those who are wandering, and in connexion with the other officers of

the church to exclude from its privileges the scandalous, most assuredly the people ought to put no hindrances in his way; but rather uphold and support him; and those who themselves become the subjects of such discipline, ought, instead of opposing the ordinance of Christ, meekly to submit to it, endeavour to profit by it, and be led to that repentance which it is designed to work in them.—On this point the Apostle has instructed people in their duty. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." Heb. xiii. 17.

5. It is another duty of a people to give a sufficient worldly *maintenance* to their minister. This has been denied. But it is astonishing how any person, who professes to believe the Scriptures, can for a moment doubt on this subject. For no duty is more plainly taught in the word of God. If some were to speak on this point in certain places they would be charged with selfish motives; but I can speak with confidence as I address a people who know, and who have ever manifested a willingness to do their duty in this respect. Under the Old Testament dispensation, God took special care that the priests and Levites, who were appointed to minister in holy things, should be provided for by the people. And in the New Testament the duty of supporting ministers of the gospel is repeatedly taught. Christ told his disciples, whom he sent forth to preach, "the labourer is worthy of his hire." Luk. x. 7. And in the epistles of Paul we read, "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things." Gal. vi. 6. "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 11, 13, 14. From these texts the duty is as plain as any duty which is taught in the Bible. Ministers ought to be relieved from worldly cares and embarrasments; for they have enough to do in the discharge of the duties of their office, without being encumbered with these; and it is their duty according to the injunction of the word of God,

to give themselves wholly to those things which pertain to the ministerial work.

6. Once more, it is the duty of people to *pray* for their minister. This also is a duty frequently taught in the Scriptures. Paul in the most solemn manner besought the Romans that they would pray for him. "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." Rom. xv. 30. He exhorted the Ephesians "praying always, with all prayer, and supplication in the Spirit &c. And for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel." Eph. vi. 18, 19. To the Colossians he wrote, "praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ." Col. iv. 3. The same request he made of the Thessalonians and the Hebrews. "Brethren pray for us." Thus earnestly did Paul seek the prayers of christians. And if he who was an apostle and divinely inspired felt their prayers to be of so much importance, most assuredly ministers in the present day have need of the prayers of their people, and it is their duty to pray for their minister; and this is their interest as well as their duty; for their prayers will tend to procure divine assistance for their minister, and thus he will be enabled better, and more usefully to his people, to perform his duty.

And now in view of this subject let minister and people examine themselves, whether they have performed the duties of the relation which they sustain to each other. Wherein we have come short and transgressed, let us be humbled. And let us set ourselves more faithfully to perform our duty.

The relation which we bear to each other is a very important one, and the manner in which we perform its duties, will have a solemn bearing on our final account.—Let us ever keep this account in view, and let it influence our conduct in this, and all the other relations of life.—Amen.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 13.

"*Thou shalt not kill.*"

All the commandments of God show, that while he aims at his own glory, he also seeks the best happiness of his creatures. Hence sin, which is a transgression of the divine commandments, while it is rebellion against the authority of God, is at the same time opposed to the best interests of men; and the man who is in any way instrumental in promoting a spirit of disobedience to the commandments of God, is an enemy to human happiness. An attentive consideration of all the commandments will prove the truth of these remarks. And they are especially forcibly proved by the commandment which at present claims our consideration. "Thou shalt not kill." For this commandment regards the dearest temporal interest of man, viz. his life.

We shall in the ensuing discourse—

I. Take a brief view of what is required by this commandment.

II. Consider some of the sins forbidden.

I. What is required in the sixth commandment.

The answer to this question we have contained in our catechism, question 64.

"*The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others.*"

With respect to our own lives it requires, that we avoid presumptuously rushing into danger, or putting our lives in peril, unless duty calls us to it; that when our lives are threatened by others, we use all lawful means to avoid the threatened danger, and if necessary and lawful defend ourselves against their murderous designs; that we avoid all those practices which tend to injure our

health, and eventually to shorten our lives; and also that we use those things which are necessary for the support of nature, and the preservation of health, and also for the restoration of health when it is impaired; such as meat, drink, sleep, labour, recreation, and medicine.

With respect to the lives of others we are in duty bound, by this commandment, according to our places and opportunities to dissuade others from those courses, which tend to impair their health, and eventually to shorten their lives; to endeavour to prevent them from laying violent hands upon themselves, and taking away their own lives, by an act of suicide; to discover to them secret plots which may be laid against their lives, by others, when known to us; to defend them when it is in our power, against the assaults of others; and to administer to their necessities, when they may be suffering, and in danger of perishing through want, even though they be our enemies.

But while it is our duty to preserve our own lives, and the lives of others, we may remark that we ought to use none, but lawful endeavours. With respect to others, it would be wrong to conceal one who had forfeited his life, by transgressing the righteous laws of the land, and prevent the course of justice. It would be wrong to prevent justice from taking place, to the condemnation of such an one, or to rescue him by stratagem or by force. And with respect to our own lives, it would be wrong to violate our consciences to save them; as in times of persecution, when the christian is called, either to deny Christ or suffer death; in such a case he is to lay down his life rather than deny Christ. This is abundantly taught in the Scriptures; and is confirmed by the example of a cloud of witnesses, whose conduct is approved in the word of God, who "were tortured, not accepting deliverance;" Heb. xi. 35; and who cheerfully resigned their lives rather than wound their consciences.—We proceed,

II. To consider the sins forbidden in the sixth commandment.

According to our catechism, question 65,

"*The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbour unjustly, and whatsoever tendeth thereunto.*"

This answer consists of three parts, viz.:

1. Suicide, or taking away of our own lives.
2. Taking away the lives of others unjustly. And
3. Whatsoever tends to the destruction of our own lives, or the lives of others.

In the remainder of this discourse, your attention is invited to a consideration of the two former. And,

1. The taking away of our own lives. This is denominated *suicide* or *self-murder*, and is directly forbidden by this commandment. "Thou shalt not kill." This when committed by persons not void of reason is a very grievous sin. It is assuming a right over our lives which belongs only to God, or to those to whom he may give it. It is contrary to the first law of nature, implanted within us by the Author of our being, viz. self-preservation. It argues a high degree of discontent and impatience under the hand of God, and a determined unwillingness to submit to his providential dispensations. It is a bold and presumptuous withdrawing from the scene of labour and of duty, which God has prescribed, before our work is done. It is listening and giving place to the devil, who tempts men to this rash deed, and obeying him rather than God. It is a presumptuous rushing uncalled to the awful bar of God. And it is in express violation of the command of God, and leaves generally no space for repentance. This deed must therefore, unless when committed by a person so deranged as not to be a moral agent, or accountable for his actions, be a most heinous sin. Thus it has been esteemed by those countries generally, on which the light of the gospel has shone; and thus the word of God considers it, which declares that "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him;" 1 John iii. 15.

From these observations, some may perhaps be ready to ask, do all self-murderers perish? I answer, if they truly repent of their sin, they shall be saved as well as other penitents; and it is a possible case that the self murderer may give himself his death wound, and survive long enough to become sensible of his crime and repent of it. But most generally, all opportunity for repentance is cut off. And further as has been already hinted, if a person commits this act in a state of derangement, as a person deprived of the exercise of his reason cannot be accountable for his actions, he cannot be accountable for this

deed; and therefore suicide in such a case cannot affect a person's future state.

Let all guard against this awful deed. And that none of us may be left to terminate our lives in this way, let us avoid those courses which lead to this fatal end. Every thing which wounds the conscience, and therefore every evil course may lead to this end; for a wounded spirit who can bear? Let us therefore endeavour to keep consciences void of offence. The sin of gambling, which irritates the passions and often destroys estate, is not unfrequently a cause of suicide. So also are all those vices which are branded with infamy by the world, and which when known fix an indelible stain on a man's character. If therefore we fear suicide, let us fear and guard against such sins as have led others to the commission of this crime. Another frequent cause is an eager grasping after the things of this world, and a fond attachment to them. When such persons are disappointed, and crossed in their pursuits, or meet with heavy losses, they are filled with vexation and sorrow, sometimes so insupportable, that they rush into the arms of death, to rid themselves, as they falsely suppose, of their troubles. This is emphatically "the sorrow of the world" which "worketh death:" 2 Cor. vii. 10. This love of the world is in itself a very great sin, and is productive of many other sins; and is especially one of the most fruitful sources of the sin of suicide. If therefore we fear self-murder, let us guard against this pitiable, degrading, wicked, and I may add detestable love of the world, to such a degree as to be glued as it were to it. Let us sensible of our own weakness, seek and secure an interest in Christ, who is able to keep us. Let us daily trust in him, and daily pray, "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." We proceed,

2. To consider this commandment as forbidding the *taking away of the lives of others, unjustly.* We say unjustly because, it is right sometimes to take the life of others. I mention three cases in which I suppose it to be just, and which are to be considered as excepted in the general law, "Thou shalt not kill." The cases are these. Life may be taken away by the civil magistrate; in lawful war; and in necessary self-defence. Let us distinctly consider each of these cases.

1. It is lawful for the *civil magistrate* to take away life. This is especially true in the case of wilful murder. Whether the divine law warrants it in any other case I shall not undertake at present to discuss. It is at least doubtful. And the moral right of the civil magistrate to take away the life of even the wilful murderer has been denied by some. But this right is evident from the word of God, in which the civil magistrate is authorized and commanded to do it. And no rulers have a right to enact laws, dispensing with the divine law in this matter. If we look into the Jewish code of laws, given by God himself, we shall find frequent commandments on this head: as in the following texts, Ex. xxi. 12, 14: "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death. If a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die." Lev. xxiv. 17; "He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death." And in the appointment of cities of refuge, of which we read in the 35th chapter of Numbers, to which the manslayer who had killed another by accident, or without design, might flee and be safe, special care was taken that the wilful murderer should receive no benefit from the provision, but in case he escaped into one of these cities, he was to be brought thence and put to death. In the same chapter it is repeated a number of times, "the murderer shall surely be put to death." And we also read, "Whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses. Moreover, ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death. So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are; for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

And this law that the murderer should be punished with death was not peculiar to the Jews, nor did it belong to the ceremonial code, which was to be done away under the gospel dispensation; but it was strictly moral, and intended to be binding on all nations and all ages; for it was given long before the ceremonial law, and long before the nation of the Jews had existence. It was given by God to Noah, the father of the world since the flood; as we read, Gen ix. 6; "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

2. We proceed to consider the second exception to the general law, viz. *lawful war.* And here a question will arise, whether any war is authorized by the divine law? On this question there have been different and contrary opinions. With diffidence, I would answer the question in the affirmative. It is true there are many wars which are highly wicked in the sight of God; such are all those which are undertaken to gratify the pride, ambition, revenge, or avarice of kings, or rulers. And from such causes have most of the wars proceeded, which have scourged and desolated our world. But when one nation is attacked by another, what is the injured nation to do, if they have not a right to defend themselves and repel force by force? The principle of self-preservation, undoubtedly implanted within us by the Author of our being, teaches us that such defence would be right. Besides there is no other way of maintaining the rights of a nation against an unjust, oppressive, and invading foe. Among individuals, the civil law maintains the rights of each. But there is no such way to maintain the rights of nations, and prevent one from injuring and destroying another; and hence, if it be right for nations to maintain their rights, it is right to defend them when invaded by opposing force to force.

These remarks go to justify defensive war, when important rights cannot otherwise be maintained. We may further remark, that what may be called offensive war, may perhaps also in some cases be lawful; for such provocations may possibly be offered by one nation to another, as that the safety and tranquillity of the nation receiving the provocations may require them, without delay, to commence hostilities. This however is properly a defensive war.

It is true, war arises from sin, and is one of the consequences of the fall; and if nations were universally actuated by the principles of justice and charity, wars would cease; and we believe that the time will come, when according to the predictions of prophecy, wars and rumours of wars will cease, and the nations will learn war no more, but beat their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. But notwithstanding this, that there are just wars, appears not only from the right which nations have to maintain their rights, but also from the Scriptures, in which we read of many wars begun and

carried on by divine direction. War, therefore, in certain cases is lawful, and consequently it is lawful in this way to take life. But at the same time, war ought not to be engaged in, if it can be avoided, consistently with the rights of nations. Every possible means ought first to be used to heal differences, and prevent bloodshed. And when war is unavoidable and must be engaged in, the object ought to be not to gratify a spirit of revenge, but to bring our enemies to respect our rights; and it ought to be conducted with humanity, and all cruelty be sedulously avoided.

3. Another case in which it is lawful to take away life is for *individual self-defence.* When a person is actually attacked by another, with the intention to take his life, it is certainly lawful, if he can in no other way preserve his own life, to slay the assassin. That this is right is taught by that natural principle, and first law of nature, self-preservation. And it is confirmed by the following text, Ex. xxii. 2; "If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him." But here it will be proper to remark, that it is lawful in self-defence to take away the life of another only for the preservation of our own lives; and this too, when we are actually assaulted, and when we can discover no other way to save ourselves.

In these three cases, viz. public justice, lawful war, and necessary self-defence, it is lawful to take away life, but in every other case the taking away of life is contrary to the sixth commandment.

Murder is the greatest crime which we can commit against our neighbour, as it deprives him of his most valuable temporal property—his life, and with it every temporal enjoyment.

This crime, in itself very great, may be much aggravated by circumstances. If it be the effect of deliberate premeditation; if it be accompanied with acts of cruelty; if it be committed against the unoffending and the helpless; if the life of the murdered be valuable, and important to church or state; and if it be against one connected by the ties of blood or affinity, such as a brother or sister, a parent or child, or a husband or wife—these and such like circumstances greatly enhance the guilt of this crime.

Murder is a most heinous sin in the sight of God. This he has shown, by directing that the severest of human punishments should be inflicted upon the murderer, even death. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed;" Gen. ix. 6. "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death;" Num. xxxv. 31. He has also shown his marked abhorrence of this crime, by following murderers and their posterity with his judgments, where they have escaped human punishments; and even visiting whole communities, with judgments for this sin, where the person who committed it had been suffered to escape with impunity. Thus David after the murder of Uriah was visited with judgment after judgment; and the Lord declared that for this deed the sword should never depart from his house. Thus the land of Israel was visited with a three year's famine in the time of David for Saul's murder of the Gibeonites. And the murders which the Jews had committed on the prophets of former ages, were visited on that generation which lived in the time of our Saviour. God has further shown his abhorrence of this crime, by the terrors and remorse with which he has frequently filled those who have committed it, before they have been legally convicted of it, and by leading in his providence to the discovery of murderers who had long been concealed. History furnishes us with many instances, of the discovery of murderers, who had long escaped detection; and this too in a way, which most forcibly indicated the peculiar providence of God in effecting the discovery. All these things show the exceedingly heinous nature of this sin.

Under the head of murder we must include, taking away the life of an antagonist in a *duel*, or single combat. It is murder in the sight of heaven. It is a direct violation of the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill." It comes under the description of murder against which death is denounced in many other texts. Such are the following, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. The duellist who kills his antagonist sheds man's blood, and therefore by man should his blood be shed. "He that smiteth a man that he die shall be surely put to death. He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death. Whoso killeth any person, the mur-

derer shall be put to death." These and other similar texts unquestionably embrace the duellist, and make him a murderer, worthy of death. And he is not only a murderer, but one in an aggravated degree; for he sets himself to execute his purpose of death, after time for cool and deliberate reflection. And the duellist is not only chargeable in the sight of heaven, with the murder of his antagonist in fact, if he succeed in killing him, and in intention if he fail; but he is also chargeable with self-murder, by wilfully and unnecessarily exposing his own life; and if he fall he goes to the bar of God as a deliberate self-murderer.

The practice of duelling originated among the barbarous Gothic nations in the dark ages. But the Gothic duellist drew not his sword for the gratification of private revenge, as is the case in modern times. Though a barbarian he was actuated by far nobler motives. He drew his sword for the defence of the injured, the weak and oppressed, and he believed the contest to be a religious appeal to the providence of God to attest innocence or to decide the point of right. He was in an error, and was guilty of a breach of the sixth commandment. Much more then the modern duellist, who does not pretend to be actuated by motives of religion, and who seldom has the plea of the protection of the innocent, the helpless, and the oppressed.

The modern practice of duelling is marked with both consummate folly and guilt, and it is a violation of the plainest principles both of reason and revelation. Its folly might be shown from the unreasonableness and absurdity of the pleas which are made in its defence. Time will not permit us to enter upon the consideration of these. We shall only make a few brief remarks, in confirmation of the guilt of this practice. In addition to the consideration already mentioned that it is a violation of the sixth commandment, and of all those texts of Scripture which prohibit, under pain of death, the taking away the life of another, we may remark, it strikes at the fundamental principles of civil society; for the duellist asserts his right to be the umpire in his own cause, and the avenger himself of the injuries he has received. Every man is equally entitled to the same right; and what would be the consequence of such a principle in universal opera-

tion, but the destruction of government, and universal anarchy? This practice is also not only at war with the general principles of society, but it is, in our country, a violation of positive laws, and therefore a breach of the law of God which requires us to be subject to every ordinance of man which does not interfere with the rights of conscience. It is also condemned by all those numerous passages of Scripture which inculcate, compassion, long-suffering, forgiveness and the like dispositions. It is also directly contrary to the examples of the saints which are recorded for our imitation, and of Christ who when he was reviled, reviled not again, and who prayed for his enemies, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do." And further, this practice oftentimes entails the most serious and lasting injuries on the friends of those who engage in it. If the person who falls has friends, their hearts are wrung with inexpressible agony, an incurable wound is often inflicted, the world is made a blank, and an untimely grave often terminates a life thus made wretched. And in addition to all these reasons against this practice, I repeat it, the duellist is guilty of deliberate, wilful murder, and though he may escape human punishment, he must shortly answer for the crime of murder at the bar of God.

I trust it is scarcely necessary to endeavour to impress upon my hearers, a sense of the evil nature of murder of every kind, or in whatever way it may be committed.—I would only in the conclusion of this discourse exhort you as you fear the commission of this crime with all its direful consequences, both in this world and the next, to guard againt the indulgence of those passions from which this vice proceeds, such as anger, hatred, malice, envy, revenge, and the like. These passions are totally opposed to the spirit of the gospel, which inculcates, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness;" and the ymay lead to the most dreadful consequences, even the murder of their object. This they have often done.—Shudder then at the thought of cherishing them. Banish them from your breasts, and cultivate the contrary temper.—Amen.

SERMON LXXVIII.

DRUNKENNESS.

ISAIAH V. 11.

"*Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them.*"

In these words the sin of *intemperate drinking* is condemned. This vice is a breach of the sixth commandment, which forbids not only the direct taking away of our own life, or the life of others, but "whatsoever tendeth thereunto." And drunkenness by gradually impairing the constitution, and causing disease, tends to shorten a man's own life; and not unfrequently does his conduct so affect and injure his near relatives as to shorten also their days.—This sin is also a breach of several of the other commandments. It is a breach of the first, as the drunkard makes his cups his chief good, and therefore his God. It is a breach of the fifth, as it unfits a man for the performance of his relative duties, and generally leads to the violation of them all. It is a breach of the eighth, which respects, his own, and his neighbour's wealth and outward estate, as it tends to impair his estate, and reduce himself and family to poverty, and unfits him to provide for them. And it is also a breach of the ninth commandment, which relates to character, as its effect is to lessen a man's reputation. Under either of these commandments we might treat of this vice.

Drunkenness may be defined to be, a state, in which the mental faculties are either partially or totally deranged, and the bodily powers weakened, from the excessive use of spirituous liquors.

This is a sin against which it is important that a warning voice should be frequently raised. For it prevails in our land, and is eminently productive of the most unhappy consequences, even the destruction of thousands both as to body and soul.

My object in the ensuing discourse is to point out the evils, the causes, and the remedies or preventives of the sin of *drunkenness.*

I. Its *evils.* And

1. It *injures and destroys* a man's *character.* It deprives a person of the due exercise of his reason. This must lessen his character, in the estimation of all persons who feel a regard for the dignity of human nature. Besides, a person intoxicated is in danger of committing many foolish and disgraceful actions, which must necessarily lessen his character. Drunkenness is an inlet to almost every other vice; and a person intoxicated is in a fit state to run into any excess of folly and wickedness. The fact is that this crime always has been and still is held in disgrace, and the loss of character is its inseparable consequent. In the Scriptures, infamy among men is attached to the character of a drunkard. When Eli supposed Hannah to be drunken, and charged her with it, she answered "Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial." 1 Sam. i. 16. Now a son or daughter of Belial in Scripture signifies the vilest of men or women. And Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. v. 11,) "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, be a drunkard—with such an one, no not to eat." Among the Spartans, it is said, this vice was considered so disgraceful, that they brought their children to loathe it by showing them a drunkard, at whom they gazed as at a monster. And history informs us that parents among the ancient Romans, to guard their children against this vice, caused one of their slaves to be made intoxicated, and then exposed him to the view and ridicule of the assembled family, that an indelible impression of the disgracefulness of the crime might be made upon them. But we need not refer to other countries and other ages for proofs that this vice is injurious to a man's character; for we doubtless have ourselves known many who once were respected, whose reputation has been lessened and destroyed by this sin.

2. The vice of drunkenness *impairs the mental faculties.* "Though this (says a medical writer* of Europe) be not the consequence of one act of intoxication, it seldom fails

*Dr. Buchan.

to succeed a course of it. By a habit of drinking, the greatest genius is often reduced to a mere ideot." And a late celebrated physician* of our own country has given his opinion as follows, "It impairs the memory, debilitates the understanding, and perverts the moral faculties." And another writer† of our own country has said, "If a man falls under the power of intemperance as a habit, the understanding gradually becomes torpid, the memory and all other faculties of the mind sink into a mopish inactivity, till at last, he becomes exactly that useless and contemptible creature described in one comprehensive syllable—a sot." Our own observation brethren will furnish abundant proof to convince us of the truth of these remarks.

3. Another evil of this sin is it *injures*, and often *ruins* a man's *estate*. The maxims of the wise man are still true—"He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich." Prov. xxi. 17. "The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty." Prov. xxiii. 21. Diminution of property is the almost sure, and inseparable consequence of habitual intemperance. For besides the expense necessary to support this vice, much time is lost, property is frequently wasted for want of care, and bad bargains are frequently made. All of which must necessarily waste estate. That poverty is the natural consequence of this vice, we must be convinced from our own observation. For we have seen persons by it, reduced from easy and even affluent circumstances to penury. And we have often seen persons already poor, kept so by this vice; when by sobriety and industry they might have gained a comfortable livelihood.—"The drunkard's account (says one‡) is commonly a short one. Business neglected, foolish bargains contracted, credit ruined, land, house, and furniture mortgaged, and then the sheriff and the prison stand ready to close up the reckoning."

4. Another evil of drunkenness is that it *brings misery* upon *innocent families*. It injures their character. For the world, though unjustly, is apt, in a measure, to estimate the respectability of persons from their friends, and especially of children from their parents. It acutely wounds the feelings of a family. The shame and pain

*Dr. Rush. †Rev. Dr. E. Porter. ‡Rev. Dr. E. Porter.

which they often feel to see a husband or wife, or parent or child, thus debased, and rushing to ruin, are inexpressible. Further this vice may have, and doubtless often does have, the most pernicious influence on the morals of a family. We often see children follow the example which a parent has set them in this respect. And even if it should not have this unhappy effect, this vice must lessen a parent's dignity in the eyes of his children and their esteem for him, and thus render him unfit to do the duty of a parent—to train up his children in the way that they should go. But these are not all the injuries which families receive from this vice; the mischief frequently extends further. Drunkards often injure their families by abusive words, and sometimes by blows. Of this, many families can doubtless bear witness. Yea the lives of families have sometimes been put in jeopardy, and they have been obliged to seek safety by flight. And further, the want of the necessaries of life, is another of the serious train of evils which this vice brings upon families. Look into prisons where debtors are confined, while their families at home are reduced to distress, and you will find all this distress frequently occasioned by intemperance. Go to the houses where by an execution for debt, families are stripped of the necessaries of life, without even a bed left on which to lie; inquire into the cause, and you will frequently find that intemperate drinking has done this. Go to our alms-houses and our poor lists, and inquire into the reason why those here found are reduced to the necessity of being supported by the public charity; and you doubtless will frequently find that intemperance, either in themselves or friends, has done this. But I forbear. The evils which result to families from this vice are almost innumerable, and beyond description.

5. Another evil of drunkenness is, it *injures health*, and if persisted in must finally *destroy* the strongest *constitution*. In confirmation of this permit me to make a quotation from a medical writer* of Europe. "Every act of intoxication (says he) puts nature to the expense of a fever in order to discharge the poisonous draught. When this is repeated, almost every day, it is easy to foresee the con-

*Dr. Buchan.

sequences. That constitution must be strong indeed, which is able long to hold out under a daily fever.—These fevers frequently end in inflammations which produce fatal effects. Though a drunkard should not fall by an acute disease, he seldom escapes those of a chronic kind---paralytic and convulsive disorders, obstructions, atrophies, dropsies, and consumptions of the lungs.—These are the common ways in which drunkards make their exit." *An eminent physician of our own country after enumerating a list of stubborn diseases as the effects of this vice adds, "It would take up a volume to describe how much other disorders, natural to the human body, are increased and complicated by it." And he gives it as his opinion, that "not less than 4,000 people die annually, from the use of ardent spirits, in the United States."—To these sentiments of the injurious consequences of drunkenness to health, physicians in general will doubtless, bear their testimony. And they who have for any considerable time observed the fate of persons addicted to this vice, must from their own observation be convinced of the correctness of these remarks. What a dreadful consequence of intemperance is this! The drunkard is a self-murderer! He as surely is the author of his own death as the man who takes his life, by a single act of violence; and at the bar of God he must as surely answer for the crime of suicide. Further, the drunkard not only injures his health and shortens his life, in the way which has been pointed out, by impairing his constitution, and laying the foundation of disease; but he exposes his life to be cut off by accidents, which while in a fit of intoxication, he is unable to to see or avoid. Many have in this state been suddenly cut off by a violent death, and thus have awakened from their drunken slumbers, at the bar of their final judge. And to all this we may add, that this vice is one of the most fruitful causes of those crimes which issue in capital punishments.—Judge Rush, in a charge to a grand jury of Pennsylvania says: "I declare in this public manner, and with the most solemn regard to truth, that I do not recollect an instance since my being concerned in the administration of justice, of a single person being put on his trial

*Dr. Rush.

for manslaughter, which did not originate in drunkenness; and but few instances of trials for murder, where the crime did not spring from the same unhappy cause."

6. Finally, to crown the catalogue of evils, this vice if continued in will *destroy* the *soul forever*. God has in his word frequently prohibited it, and enjoined the contrary virtue. "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, *temperance*." 2 Pet. i. 5, 6. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live *soberly*." Tit. ii. 11, 12. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." Eph. v. 18. "Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness." Rom. xiii. 13. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and so that day come upon you unawares." Luk. xxi. 34. Such are the laws of God. And will he not punish the wilful and habitual transgressor of his laws? He assuredly will.—Accordingly he hath pronounced woes upon those who are addicted to this vice, and hath expressly excluded them from his kingdom." "Wo to the drunkards of Ephraim." Is. xxviii. 1. And in our text. "Wo unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink, that continue until night, till wine inflame them." "Be not deceived; neither fornicators &c. nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "The works of the flesh are manifest which are these, adultery &c. drunkenness, of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Gal. v. 19, 21. In these passages the drunkard may see his doom. It is impossible for him while he sustains this character to enter the kingdom of God. And he must be an heir of eternal misery. Thus my hearers I have briefly described to you some of the fatal consequences, here and hereafter, of the sin of intemperance. To what has been said under this head, permit me to add the words of Solomon. Prov. xxiii. 29, 30, 31, 32, 34. "Who hath wo? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contention? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine. Look not thou upon the

wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Yea thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast." We proceed,

II. To inquire into some of the causes that lead to this destructive vice.

1. The *example* and *conduct* of some *parents*, have led their children into this vice. Children are prone to imitate the example of parents; and doubtless example in this respect has often had a pernicious influence, and has been the cause of intemperance in many children. Parents also, sometimes indulge their children, when young, in the free use of spirituous liquors, until a love for them is contracted. They also, sometimes are not sufficiently careful to restrain them from places, and company, where they are in danger of contracting this habit.

2. An opinion that spirituous liquors, are *necessary to brace the system*, and strengthen it to bear bodily labour and fatigue, has frequently been the cause of producing a habit of intemperance. If a little be useful, which however has been denied by the most eminent physicians, it had need to be taken with great caution lest a habit is induced. For if it be established as a principle that a man cannot labour without it, and that every time he feels weary he must take some to invigorate him, the consequence will be that a habit of intemperance will almost certainly be soon formed.

3. Another cause which sometimes leads to intemperance is, at first using spirituous liquors as a *medicine*. "I have known (says Dr. Rush) many men and women of excellent characters and principles, who have been betrayed by occasional doses, taken as a medicine, into the love of spirituous liquors, insomuch that they have afterwards fallen sacrifices to their fatal effects."

4. Another frequent cause is *evil company*. This has led astray many promising youth, and ruined them, both for this world and the next. They have fallen into jovial company, where strong drink was freely used; and where they have been urged to partake; and if they declined or drank sparingly, they were ridiculed as void of spirit. Unable to bear the reproach of fools, they yielded. They went away ashamed, resolved never again to act thus a-

gainst their judgment and conscience. Temptation was again presented; their scruples were more easily overcome; and thus by degress the warning voice of conscience has been stilled, and many have contracted a habit of intemperance and ruined themselves forever.

5. Another cause has sometimes been, the *troubles* of this life. Many have had recourse to the intoxicating bowl to drown their cares and their sorrows, and thus have brought upon themselves one of the greatest of afflictions which could befall them.

There are other causes which we have not time to notice. But,

6. There is one which holds a prominent place, which I feel it to be my indispensable duty, while on this subject, to mention. I mean the many *tippling houses* which are to be found in our land. These are the most fruitful causes of the destructive vice of intemperance, which is annually destroying the peace and happiness of numerous families, bringing thousands to an untimely grave, and sending multitudes to the bottomless pit. The baneful influence of these houses appears from the anxiety which our Legislature has discovered to suppress them, by enacting laws against them; and it also appears from their effects which we are forced to behold. Concerning these houses one of the chief magistrates of a neighbouring state remarks. "These are the polluted fountains that send forth constant streams to corrupt and demoralize the people.—Here our youth the growing hopes of their country, are initiated in all the mysteries of iniquity, and lay the foundation of those destructive habits that never forsake them." I proceed to the

III. Thing proposed, which was to point out the remedies and preventives of the vice of intemperance.—As to remedies, to cure the habit in those in whom it has become confirmed, we have but little hope indeed that any can be pointed out which will prove effectual. This remark, painful as it is, we are compelled to make from facts; for rarely indeed do we see the drunkard forsake his cups. This vice perhaps more than any other, blinds the mind, hardens the heart, sears the conscience, and unfits a person for serious reflection. And drunkards indeed seem to be given up of God, to walk for a little while in their own ways, and follow their own heart's lusts, and

exhibit human depravity, until they drop into the pit. We have little hope from pointing out remedies. I would only observe on this subject, that if persons addicted to this vice wish to reform, I believe it is in vain to attempt a gradual reformation ; they must break off at once, and inscribe, " touch not, taste not, handle not," on every thing which contains the poisonous draught.

But while remedies, we have reason to fear, will be of little avail, preventives may be of use to save those who have not yet become habituated to this vice.

As the grand preventive let us seek and cherish the grace of God in our hearts ; this will be the best means of preserving us from falling into this destructive sin ; and let us sincerely and daily, feeling our own weakness, offer up the petition, " lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." Let us shun all those causes which have been mentioned as producing this vice. Let us deeply reflecton its evils, both in time and eternity, as they have been pointed out ; and let us set these evils constantly before us when we are tempted to this sin. Let those who are holding out temptations to this vice, and furnishing the means, cease from their unlawful and murderous gain. Let all, according to their stations, do all that is in their power, by their example, their opinions, their influence, and their authority, to restrain others from this vice, and remove the causes which lead to it. And let those who find themselves, beginning to love and thirst after the intoxicating draught, immediately deny themselves, and destroy the habit in its first commencement. This, if ever, is the time to escape the destructive snare. Every advance strengthens the habit and weakens resistance. Flee from the first approaches of this vice, while the voice of reason can yet be heard, as you would from the most dangerous enemy.

Permit me in the conclusion of this discourse to address different classes of persons who may be in this assembly. And if any subject requires plainness, this does. If against any sin it is my duty to cry aloud and spare not, it is this : for intemperance is the demon which is destroying the peace and happiness of many families. It is this, which more than any thing else, deprives many innocent families of the necessaries of life ; it is this, which is making many persons pests of society, and cumberers of the

earth ; and it is this, which annually murders the bodies and souls of many among us. Against such a vice, such a destructive demon as this, ministers ought to raise the alarm. If we found a man attempting to take his own life by an act of violence, would we not endeavour by every means in our power to prevent the rash and dreadful deed ? If we found a thief or murderer attempting to take the property or life of our neighbour, would we not give the alarm ? And shall we not endeavour to prevent those, who though more slowly, yet as surely are in danger of murdering themselves by intemperance ? Shall we not sound the alarm against that which is robbing them of their character, stripping their families of the necessaries of life, and murdering not only the body but the soul forever ?

Are there any here addicted to this vice ? It is probable but few if any ; for this is generally one of the consequences of this vice, that it causes persons to withdraw themselves from the house of God. But if there be any, be exhorted I beseech you, without delay, to break off from this sin. Consider its evils which have been enumerated, and let them operate as motives to lead you to immediate reformation. You are destroying your character ; you are injuring your mental powers ; you are wasting your property ; you are covering your family with shame ; you are distressing and reducing them to want and beggary, and perhaps you have already brought them into this state ; you are destroying your health, and swiftly hastening yourselves to an untimely grave ; you are murdering your bodies, and stand chargeable with self-murder in the sight of heaven, as surely as the unhappy wretch who ends his days by violence from his own hands ; and you are destroying your souls, and must very soon if you continue your course awake in the world of woe, where instead of adding drunkenness to thirst, you will cry in vain for a drop of water to cool your tormented tongue ; and where, instead of the intoxicating bowl, you will have given you to drink the wine of the wrath of Almighty God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. Awful considerations ! will they not make you pause, and tremble, and immediately break off your sin ? What then will ? Unhappy soul, we can but pity and weep over you.

My hearers, who are not yet addicted to this vice, I turn to you and beseech you by all these solemn considerations to guard against every approach to this sin.

And my brethren is it not the duty of us all, by every means in our power, to endeavour to prevent the growth of this vice? Shall we stand idle spectators, and see usefulness destroyed, property wasted, families made wretched, fellow creatures and neighbours and friends murdering themselves, and their souls sinking to endless woe, and take no measures to prevent all this wretchedness?

Let those who are in the habit of retailing spirituous liquors, to those who thus abuse them, and suffer it to be drunk in their shops, reflect seriously on this subject. Can you do this without guilt? The breach of the laws of your country is a breach of the law of God. But this is not all. This practice, doubtless, greatly encourages and increases intemperance: it takes from many families the means of procuring the necessaries of life; it impairs and destroys domestic happiness; it swells the list of our poor, to be supported at the public expense; and it is conspiring with other causes, to bring many to an untimely grave, and to destroy their souls forever. And can any of you, my hearers, uphold a practice fraught with so many and such great evils as these? Can any who fear God, and regard the good of their fellow creatures continue such a practice? Hear what the word of God says, "neither be partaker of other men's sins;" 1 Tim. v. 22. "Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that puttest thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also;" Hab. ii. 15. These texts apply directly to the case before us. My hearers if any of you are in this practice, I solemnly exhort and charge you, as you would not have the cries of the poor, the widow and the fatherless to go up to heaven against you; as you regard the favour of God; and as you would not have to answer at his bar for being an accessory to the murder of the bodies and the souls of men, cease from this practice.

Parents, this subject also addresses you. By example and by precept endeavour early to impress your children with an abhorrence of the sin of drunkenness; guard them against every approach to it; and especially keep them from the places and company where they will be exposed to temptation.

Let magistrates and all in authority, by their influence and by a faithful execution of the laws, stem this destructive torrent which is overwhelming our land. The wicked may cry out against you; but you will have the applause of the virtuous, and the approbation of your own conscience and your God; and the blessing of thousands, saved from ruin, will come upon you.

May the Lord apply this discourse, and make it in- of good.—AMEN.

SERMON LXXIX.

HATRED.

1 JOHN III. 15.

"*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*"

The law of God is exceeding broad. It reaches the soul and regulates its dispositions and exercises, as well as external bodily actions. "The law is spiritual;" Rom. vii. 14. This is applicable to all the commandments. They all may be broken without external actions. Hence, we may be guilty of a breach of the sixth commandment, without actually killing a person. Whosoever exerciseth murderous dispositions is a transgressor of this commandment. This is clearly taught in our text. "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer." And also, by our Saviour in his sermon on the mount, Mat. v. 21, 22; "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

By *brother*, in our text, we are to understand mankind generally, who are our brethren by nature. To hatred are nearly allied, anger, malice, wrath, revenge, and an unforgiving temper, all of which are breaches of the sixth commandment. We shall consider them together in the ensuing discourse, the object of which is,

To offer reasons against the indulgence of these passions.

1. Their indulgence is directly *contrary* to the *character of God.* The Supreme Being is a perfect pattern of excellence. It is therefore the duty of all intelligent creatures to be conformed to the divine image, or to be like unto God ; and this duty is frequently enjoined in the Scriptures. Now, "God is love;" 1 John iv. 8. Hatred, anger, malice, wrath, revenge, and the like, in the sense, in which they are forbidden to men in Scripture, are not to be found in God. Would we then be conformed to God ; we must put away all anger, and malice, and wrath, and hatred, and be kind, compassionate, and forgiving; and we must dwell in love ; for "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him ;" 1 John iv. 16.

2. These passions are *opposed* to the *temper* and *example* of *Christ.* Love to our fallen race influenced him to stoop to a union with our nature; to submit to poverty, reproach, and persecution ; and to labour, suffer, and die. And if Christ so loved us, ought we not also to love one another? His example is a perfect pattern, and therefore ought to be imitated by us ; and the Scriptures make it our duty to imitate his example. Now he felt no hatred towards our race, notwithstanding the wickedness of men and the continual ill treatment he received. He was often grieved at the obstinacy of sinners, and the hardness of their hearts and he felt a holy indignation at their evil conduct; but he was never angry in a sinful sense. When anger is ascribed to him, we must understand it either of grief or of holy indignation; while at the same time, he pitied the object, and would willingly have done him good, if he would have received it. Malice never for a moment was found in his soul. Notwithstanding he received the most unjust and cruel treatment, and might have commanded twelve legions of angels to crush his enemies, he avenged not himself but gave place unto wrath ; yea, when he hung on the cross he prayed for his murder-

ers, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do;" Luk. xxiii. 34; and he gave his life a ransom for the race which so cruelly treated him, and some of his very murderers were saved by the efficacy of the blood which they shed. This argument is used by the apostle Peter. "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:—who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously;" 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23. Would we then follow the example of Christ, which it is our duty to imitate; we must avoid the indulgence of all those passions which have been mentioned, and be long-suffering, kind, and compassionate, forgive one another, and live in love. Especially is this incumbent on professed christians, who avowedly take Christ as their pattern.

3. The *example* of the *saints* afford an argument against the indulgence of these passions. For we are exhorted to "be followers of them who through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" Heb. vi. 12. Joseph, instead of hating his brethren, though they provoked his hatred; and instead of revenging himself upon them, though he had them fully in his power, returned good for evil. Stephen, when his enemies were stoning him to death, kneeled down and prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" Acts. vii. 60. And Paul speaking of himself and his fellow apostles said, "being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we suffer it; being defamed, we entreat;" 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13. The same temper and conduct have been manifested, in the different ages of the church, by those of whom the world was not worthy, and who were persecuted even unto death.

4. Another argument against the indulgence of these passions, is, that *we have done much to offend God, and yet we hope for his forgiveness and love.* Shall we, for every trifle, be angry with our fellow creatures, and seek their hurt, when God is so patient and long-suffering towards us? Can it be right to exercise hatred towards our brother, when we expect the Lord to exercise infinite love towards us? Is it not unreasonable, that we should be unmerciful and refuse to be kind and compassionate to our brother, when we are continually dependent on the mercy of God for every breath, every comfort of life, and

all our hopes of future salvation? Is it not manifestly wrong that we should thirst for vengeance upon those, whom we suppose to have injured us, when we deserve every moment to have the vengeance of God fall upon us for our sins, and yet it is withheld? Must it not be very wicked, to refuse to be reconciled to those with whom we are at variance, when God is willing to be reconciled unto us, who are altogether the offending party, and gave his Son to die to render a reconciliation consistent with his perfections, and condescends to beseech us to be reconciled? And must it not be exceedingly offensive to God, that we should refuse to forgive our brother who hath trespassed against us; when we have so much need of forgiveness from God, and when we have so much more to be forgiven than we can forgive? Our brother's offences against us, be they ever so great, bear a far smaller proportion to our offences against God, than the hundred pence to the ten thousand talents in the parable. And has our Lord forgiven, or do we hope he will forgive us, the ten thousand talents which we owe him; and shall we refuse to forgive our brother the hundred pence which he may owe us? Surely our situation with respect to God, and what we need and hope for from him, most forcibly teach us the duty of exercising a similar temper towards our brethren of mankind.

5. The *Scriptures* abundantly *teach* that the *indulgence* of these *passions* is *wrong*, and that men ought to maintain an opposite temper and conduct. They inculcate love, kindness, gentleness, peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness of injuries; as in the following texts among others, John xiii. 34. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." John xv. 12; "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you." John xv. 17; "These things I command you, that ye love one another." 1 John iv. 21; "This commandment have we from him that he who loveth God, love his brother also. Rom. xii. 10, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21; "Be kindly affectioned one to another; with brotherly love. Bless them which persecute you: bless and curse not. Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. Be not over-

come of evil, but overcome evil with good." Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3, 32; "I beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called; with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Col. iii. 12, 13; "Put on therefore (as the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Mat. v. 23, 24; "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Mat xviii. 21, 22; "Then came Peter to him and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee until seven times; but, until seventy times seven." And Mat. v. 44; "I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." In these, and many other texts we are taught that it is our duty to exercise love, compassion, gentleness, kindness, and long-suffering; to live in peace; to forgive those who have offended us; and to be reconciled to those with whom we may be at variance. And in these are doubtless clearly implied, a prohibition to indulge the contrary passions of anger, hatred, and the like.

But that the indulgence of these passions is wicked, we are taught, not only by those texts which inculcate a contrary temper; but also by numerous texts in which it is expressly forbidden. Such are the following, Lev. xix. 17, 18; "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people. Prov. xxiv. 17, 29; "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad, when he stumbleth. Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work." Rom. xii 19; "Avenge not yourselves." Eph. iv. 31; "Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and

clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." Col. iii. 8; "Put off all these, anger, wrath, malice." Thus God has expressly and repeatedly in his word, forbidden the indulgence of these passions; and if we regard the authority of God we will guard against it, and habitually maintain the contrary temper. The texts of Scripture on this subject are very numerous; and I have been the more particular in quoting a considerable number of them, because even professing christians are prone to transgress in this respect.

6. I mention one other argument to dissuade from the indulgence of these passions; and that is, that they *who live in them* or habitually indulge them *cannot be the people of God but are children of wrath.* The word of God excludes them from the kingdom of heaven, and consigns them to eternal perdition. That such persons cannot enter heaven, appears from the very nature of things. Heaven is a place of perfect harmony and love. They therefore who are filled with anger, hatred, malice, or revenge, or who habitually indulge an unforgiving temper, certainly are entirely unfit for admission into heaven. But the Scriptures are express on this subject, and as decidedly exclude such persons from the kingdom of God, as they do the habitual drunkard, liar, profane swearer, and such like sinners. The Scriptures frequently teach that the exercise of the opposite temper of love, &c. is essential to the christian character. Thus we read, John xiii. 35.—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Gal. v. 22, 23. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekess." Jam. iii. 17. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." 1 John ii. 10. "He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." 1. John iii. 14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." 1 John iv. 7. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." And 1 John v. 1. "Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." Hence we learn that love towards our brethren is an essential trait of the christian character; and therefore they who are desti-

tute of this love, and much more they who indulge the contrary temper, cannot be christians. And the Scriptures not only by consequence teach this, but also most explicitly and directly declare it. Thus we read in our text, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Of the same import are the following texts in the same Epistle. 1 John ii. 9. 11. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness." 1 John iii. 10, 14. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil; whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death," And 1 John iv. 8, 20. He that loveth not knoweth not God. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." Gal. v. 20, 21. The Apostle enumerates the works of the flesh, and includes in the catalogue, "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, and strife;" and adds, "Of the which, I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." And Jam. iii. 14, 15, 16. We read, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.—This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

And as habitual hatred excludes from the kingdom of heaven, so also does an unforgiving temper. In the Lord's prayer Christ teacheth us to offer up this petition—"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Mat. vi. 12. Here we are evidently taught to expect forgiveness, only as we forgive; and every time we say the Lord's prayer, while there are any whom we have not from the heart forgiven, we do virtually pray for our own destruction. Again our Saviour has expressly declared, Mat. vi. 15. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses." And Mark xi. 25. 26. "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any: that your father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive,

neither will your father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." Language could not be more pointed, than that used in these texts, to prove that unless we forgive, we cannot be forgiven. And it is astonishing that any person, whatever be his profession, can for a single moment, after reading or hearing these texts, entertain a hope of salvation, while he refuses to forgive all who have offended him.

The necessity of forgiveness, and the fatal consequences of an unforgiving temper, are further taught and enforced by our Saviour in the 18th Chapter of Matthew. Peter had asked him, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven." Christ then spake a parable to illustrate and enforce the doctrine of forgiveness. A certain king reckoned with his servants. Among them was found one which owed him ten thousand talents, a debt which he was totally unable to pay. His lord moved with compassion forgave him the debt. Mark now the conduct of this servant who had been forgiven so much, towards his fellow-servants. "The same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence, and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, pay me that thou owest." His fellow-servant entreated "have patience with me and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt." Such is thy conduct, O man or woman, who refuseth to forgive thy fellow creature, who has offended thee! You expect God to forgive you ten thousand talents, or your numerous and aggravated sins against him, and yet refuse to forgive your brother an hundred pence, or the comparatively trifling offences, which he has committed against you. In the sequel of the parable you may hear your doom. When his lord heard what the unforgiving servant had done, he "called him, and said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise," added our Saviour, "shall my heavenly Father do

also unto you, if ye from your heart forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

I shall now conclude this discourse with a word of application. This subject concerns us all, whether we profess religion or not. It is peculiarly inconsistent and criminal in professors of religion, to indulge these passions; but in all, they are highly displeasing to God, and exclude from the kingdom of heaven. If then eternal life be important, it is important, that we put away these hateful passions, and live in peace and love. Are there any present, whether they profess religion or not, who hate others, who maintain malice in their hearts towards any one, and desire and seek revenge, and would rejoice in their injury? Are there any present, who are at variance with their neighbour, and have not sought reconciliation, or have refused and continue to refuse to be reconciled, and have not from the heart forgiven those who have offended them? Let them seriously reflect on this subject. Your character is directly contrary to the image of God, to which it is your duty and your glory to be conformed.—Your temper and conduct are totally unlike the perfect example of Christ, which it is your duty to imitate; and also of that cloud of witnesses who through faith and patience have inherited the promises. Your conduct is totally inconsistent with your expectations from God. You hope that God will forgive you, your repeated and aggravated offences against him, and yet you refuse to forgive and love your brother. You act in direct opposition to the will of God most clearly made known in his word.—And such a temper as you maintain is inconsistent with the christian character, and excludes from the kingdom of heaven. These may be hard sayings to corrupt nature; but they make a part of the whole counsel of God which I am to declare to you. If you hate your brother you are in darkness. If you hate your brother and still say that you love God, you deceive yourselves, the Scriptures declare in plain terms that such are liars. If you hate your brother, you are a murderer, and no murderer hath eternal life. Have any offended you, and do you refuse to forgive them? be assured God will not forgive you. And have you even pronounced their forgiveness with your lips; but still does hatred keep possession of your hearts? be assured God will not forgive you; for

he has declared he will not, unless you from the *heart* forgive. Brethren this is an important subject. We have reason to fear that many persons fatally deceive themselves on this point, by entertaining a hope of salvation, while they habitually maintain hatred and an unforgiving temper towards others. On the authority of the word of God, I solemnly declare to such, that they bear the marks of the children of Satan, as really as does the drunkard or the profane swearer; and they have no more right to hope that they are in a state of salvation.

Such are exhorted to repent of these sins. Put away all anger, hatred, malice, wrath, and revenge. If you are at variance, with any man, whether he be the offending party or not, seek to be reconciled—seek it without delay.—Let not the sun go down upon your wrath. If your neighbour refuses to be reconciled, you then have discharged your duty. And if there be any that have offended you, without delay forgive them, and be at peace with them. I know this is hard to the selfish nature of corrupted man. But remember it is an essential part of true religion, that we deny ourselves. How can we look to God to be reconciled unto us, to forgive us our numerous and aggravated offences against him, and to love us, while we refuse to be reconciled to our neighbour, forgive, and love him! To conclude brethren, the matter is plainly reduced in the word of God, to this plain simple proposition, we must forgive and love our brother, or we must eternally perish.—

SERMON LXXX.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 14.

"*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*"

This commandment respects our own, and our neighbour's *chastity*. The commandment, like most of the others in the decalogue, is expressed negatively; but in all the commandments, where a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is implied and required. The word *adultery*, in the text, is evidently used as a generick term, embracing every species of unchastity, and every thing which has a tendency to lead to it. All these are prohibited by the seventh commandment, and the contrary duties are required. The law of God regards the speech as well as the actions; and therefore this commandment forbids unchaste conversation, and requires chastity in our speech. And, "the law is spiritual"—whatever is forbidden in the outward conduct, is also prohibited in thought, and desire, and intention. Therefore the seventh commandment forbids, not only overt acts of unchastity, and obscene conversation; but also impure thoughts, and desires, and intentions, and requires the contrary.

The duties required, and the sins forbidden in this commandment, are excellently stated in our Catechism. We shall consider each distinctly.

I. The *duties* required. These we have pointed out in our Catechism, in the answer to the *seventy first* question.

"*What is required in the seventh commandment?*

The seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own, and our neighbour's chastity, in heart, speech and behaviour."

The seventh commandment requires us to preserve our *own* chastity. In doing this, we are to maintain a purity of conduct, and avoid all overt acts of unchastity. "We are

is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour: not in the lust of concupiscence;" 1 Thes. iv. 3—5. We are to maintain a purity of conversation, and to suffer no obscene language to pass our lips. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying;" Eph. iv. 29. And we are to keep our hearts from all impure thoughts, desires, and intentions; for God looketh at the heart; and as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he, in the divine estimation. And when such thoughts and desires arise in the mind, if we would preserve our own chastity, we must not harbour or indulge them; but on the contrary resist, and endeavour to banish them.

To maintain in ourselves, that purity, in heart, speech, and behaviour, which is required by this commandment, we ought to avoid and guard against every thing, which may prove a temptation to the sin forbidden. We ought to resist the first desires towards it in our hearts. We ought to watch over our senses, and turn our eyes away from objects which may excite unchaste desires, stop our ears against lascivious discourse, and refrain from such touches or dalliances, as may excite and inflame the lustful passions. In regard to objects which were calculated to tempt him to this sin, Job made a covenant with his eyes, that he would not look upon them; Job xxxi. 1. We ought also to shun all light and lewd company, which may prove a snare to draw into this sin; as Solomon exhorted. "Remove thy way far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house;" Prov. v. 8. We ought to be diligent in business, and temperate in the use of meat and drink; for industry and temperance are favourable to chastity; while their opposites, idleness and intemperance, have a tendency to pamper and inflame those passions, the indulgence of which is forbidden by the seventh commandment. We ought also to pray to be kept from temptation to a breach of this commandment; and to have grace to resist when we are tempted. And we ought as the best preservative of our own chastity, to seek, and cultivate, and maintain the fear of God in our hearts, and a sense of his constant presence, and notice, and of our accountability to him. This would lead us to

feel and act as Joseph did, when he said, under temptation from his mistress to violate this commandment. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And fled from the temptation.

The seventh commandment also requires us to preserve the chastity of our *neighbour*, or of others. To do this we must avoid the commission with others of the sin forbidden by the commandment. We should abstain from every thing, in our actions towards others, and our conversation with them which may lead them to acts of unchastity. We should discountenance in others, not only overt acts of uncleanness; but all lascivious conduct and conversation. We should, as we have opportunity, warn others, when we see them in danger of being led into this sin. We should train up our children and all under our care, to abhor the sins forbidden by this commandment. We should keep out of their hands all books which have a lascivious tendency. And we should carefully guard their company, and by advice, and when necessary, by authority, keep them from evil associates, and from places where they will be in danger of becoming corrupted.

We proceed to consider,

II. The *sins* forbidden in this commandment.

These we have stated in our Catechism, in the answer to the *seventy second* question.

"*What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?*

The seventh commandment forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions."

The commandment prohibits *adultery*. In the strict acceptation of this word, it signifies unchastity in a married person. But as has already been observed, this word is not intended to be so restricted in our text. It is a generick term, embracing every species of unchastity. This commandment may be broken by an unmarried person as well as by one who is married. In unmarried persons the overt act of uncleanness is called *fornication*.—— Sometimes in the commission of the crime forbidden by the seventh commandment, force is used; then the crime is called *rape*, which is a very great aggravation of the sin. It is also an aggravation of sin forbidden by the seventh commandment, when it is committed by persons nearly related to each other by blood or affinity. The crime in such circumstances is called *incest*.

And here I would remark that marriages are incestuous, when they take place between persons near of kin to each other. Such persons are habitually living in incest, and therefore an aggravated violation of the seventh commandment. And here a question will arise. Within what degree of consanguinity or affinity is marriage unlawful, or incestuous, and a breach of the seventh commandment? Marriage within the degrees of consanguinity, or relation by blood, nearer than that of cousins, appears to be positively forbidden in the Scriptures. And it has been made a question by some, whether it is lawful even for cousins to marry. On this point, I would say, there is nothing in the Scriptures forbidding such a connexion; but on the contrary there are examples which favour its lawfulness. There are also certain degrees of affinity forbidden in the Scriptures. A connexion with a father's wife or step-mother is very severely condemned by the apostle Paul; 1 Cor. v. 1. In Leviticus, Chapters xviii, and xx, if the laws therein contained relate to marriage, we find forbidden, father's wife or step-mother, father's brother's or uncle's wife, son's wife or daughter-in-law, and a brother's wife or sister-in-law. In all these, there is no relation by blood. In regard to the last relation, by a positive law, which we find, Deut. xxv. 5; it was lawful and a duty for a brother to marry the widow of his deceased brother when he died without children.

A relation similar to this is, the marriage of a man with the sister of the deceased wife. This is a connexion which is frequently formed in the present day. Its lawfulness has been much questioned; and by many eminent writers it has been pronounced incestuous; and it is so pronounced in the Confession of Faith of our Church, Chap. xxiv. Sect. 4. Whether such marriages may be formed is a very serious question; inasmuch as if they are unlawful, they who are thus connected are, in the sight of God, constantly living in the violation of the seventh commandment. Without undertaking in this place, to discuss the merits of this question, I would earnestly exhort all who fear God, never to form such a connexion, until they have thoroughly examined the subject, and fully satisfied their minds of the lawfulness of such a step, lest they be found at the bar of God, to have been guilty of incest. And further I would remark on this sub-

ject, that all things which are lawful are not expedient. And since there are enough other persons, with whom to form a connexion by marriage; and marriage with a wife's sister is very offensive to many of God's people, and oftentimes creates much trouble in the church, persons, if they were satisfied that there was nothing unlawful in such connexions would do better to abstain from them.

Another way in which the seventh commandment is broken, is by *polygamy*, or having more wives than one at the same time. This is contrary to the original institution of marriage, which was between only one pair. It is contrary to the instructions of our Saviour, when he said, referring to the original institution of marriage: "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh:" Mat. xix. 4—6. And the apostle Paul in the frequent reference he makes to the conjugal relation, uniformly speaks of it as existing between one man and one woman. It is true some good men of old practised polygamy. But we are to consider these examples as instances of the imperfections of these men, and not as forming arguments of the lawfulness of the practice. Polygamy is contrary to the institution of God in relation to marriage; and they who are guilty of it, and especially under the light of christianity are transgressors of the seventh commandment, and are living in adultery.

This commandment may also be broken by *divorce*. There is unquestionably a ground of divorce which is authorised by the divine law. But divorces doubtless often take place, in opposition to the law of God; and the parties are married again to other persons. Such marriages are a breach of the seventh commandment; and the parties brought together, by them are constantly living in adultery in the sight of heaven.

Marriage is undoubtedly a divine ordinance. It was instituted by God himself in the garden of Eden. Our Saviour in answer to a question of the Pharisees, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" Mat. xix. 3; referred them to the original institution of marriage, in the case of our first parents; and hence in-

ferred that God had joined married persons together, and that man ought not to put them asunder; "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder;" ver. 6. Hence we learn that every truly married pair are joined together by God; and that man, though clothed with human authority, has no right to dissolve this connexion, and divorce those thus joined together, unless God permits it. In what cases then has he in his word authorized divorces? for in no other cases have human tribunals the right to grant them. I answer he has authorized them in the case of the adultery of one of the parties; but I believe in no other case. In this case the innocent party has a right, in the sight of God, to seek for and obtain a divorce, and to marry again; but not the guilty party. That a want of fidelity in either party is a sufficient, and the only legal ground of divorce in the sight of God, appears from what our Saviour said to the Pharisees in the conversation already alluded to—"I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery;" Mat. xix. 9. Equally explicit is the declaration of our Saviour, Mat. v. 32; "I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery."

Many married persons are divorced by human authority, where this cause is not alledged, and the persons thus divorced marry again; but such marriages are unlawful in the sight of heaven, and the persons thus married are constantly living in adultery, and no human laws can screen them from this charge in the sight of heaven.

I proceed to point out other breaches of the seventh commandment.

Unchaste or obscene conversation is prohibited by this commandment. Such conversation offends and pains the chaste ear, and is calculated to excite lust in those who use it, and in others who hear it. Against such conversation are the following texts: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;" Eph. iv. 29. "But fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you—neither filthiness nor foolish talking;" Eph. v. 3,4. "Put off filthy communication out of your mouth;" Col. iii. 8.

Impure thoughts, desires, and intentions are also a breach of this commandment. This is explicitly taught by our Saviour; Mat. v. 28; "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Further, whatever has a tendency to excite, and inflame the lustful passions, and tempt to the acts directly forbidden by the seventh commandment is a breach of the commandment.

Hence I remark that associating with loose company, the tendency of which according to the Scriptures is to corrupt good manners; and reading books of a lascivious tendency, is a breach of the spirit of this commandment. So also indecent and immodest apparel. Solomon speaks of the attire of an harlot; Prov. vii. 10. There is an attire which is contrary to modesty, and which is calculated to excite improper desires in others. Idleness is also a sin against this commandment; as it tends to incite and nourish the lusts of the flesh. "Abundance of idleness," is mentioned, Ezek. xvi. 9, as one cause of the excessive lewdness of Sodom. Excess or intemperance in eating and drinking is also forbidden by this commandment; as such excess pampers the flesh, and has a tendency to excite and strengthen the lusts of the flesh. In short whatever has a tendency to excite to lust is forbidden by the seventh commandment.

The *evils* of sins against the seventh commandment are many and great.

No class of sins is more frequently spoken of and forbidden than this. And both the terms used to express these sins, and the explicit declarations of the Lord in regard to them, show his great abhorrence of them. Sins against this commandment are infamous among men, and more than perhaps any other, when discovered, destroy character. To females especially, the consequence is indelible disgrace in the sight of the world. The wise man speaking of those who commit this sin, said; "A wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away;" Prov. vi. 33. Many instances which we have known accord with this text.

Sins against the seventh commandment also frequently bring misery on others. They inflict a deep, and often-

times lasting and incurable wound, on innocent families, and friends. They have often blasted the fondest hopes of parents; and they have gone down to their graves, mourning over a lost child. They have destroyed the peace and enjoyment of a partner for the rest of life. They have entailed disgrace upon children. And they have caused brothers and sisters to blush, whenever the name of a once beloved brother or sister has been pronounced in their hearing.

In the sight of God some of the sins against this commandment are so offensive, and so injurious to the interests of society, that by the laws which he gave the Jews, they who were guilty of them, were to be punished with death.

Sins against this commandment also, exclude from the kingdom of heaven. The person cannot be a child of God who habitually lives in a violation of the seventh commandment. The Scriptures are very plain on this subject. Attend to the following texts; "Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge;" Heb. xiii. 4. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness.—For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;" Col. iii. 6. "Fornication, and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among you. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" Eph. v. 3, 5. "Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God;" 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. "The works of the flesh are manifest which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness—of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" Gal. v. 19, 21. These texts unequivocally teach that they who live in sins against the seventh commandment, cannot have any title to the favour of God; but must be under his wrath, and in the way to everlasting perdition. And if they should die without true repentance for these sins, they will inevitably perish forever.

And a very alarming consideration on this subject is, there is but little hope that persons who have become habituated to these crimes ever will repent and forsake their sins. Sins against the seventh commandment per-

haps more than any other harden the heart, stupify the conscience, and provoke God to withdraw his Holy Spirit, and leave the person to his own corrupt heart. In confirmation of this remark we read in the Scriptures; "Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart;" Hos. iv. ii. Solomon speaking of the abandoned woman, and warning others to beware of her, says; "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death;" Prov. vii. 11. And in another place; "Her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead: None that go unto her return again, neither take they hold of the paths of life;" Prov. ii. 18, 19.

The preceding considerations showing the evils of the sins against the seventh commandment are very solemn, and ought to alarm any who may be addicted to these sins; and lead them without delay, as they value their own immortal souls, and would avoid the tremendous wrath of God, to break off their sins, repent of them, and seek for forgiveness and cleansing, in the blood of Christ. Although there is but little hope that such will repent, and forsake their sins; yet if they do, and flee to Christ by faith, notwithstanding the odiousness of their sins in the sight of God, he will pardon, accept and save them. For "the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;" 1 John i. 7. And we read of Corinthians who had been addicted to these sins, being "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;" 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And let all who are not as yet addicted to these sins, as they value their souls and the favour of God, guard against every thing which may lead them away from the path of virtue.—Amen.

SERMON LXXXI.

DUTIES OF THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

1 TIMOTHY v. 8.

"*But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.*"

It is the duty of a church to make provision for the relief of their poor widows. This the apostle enjoined upon Timothy, in our text. But at the same time he informed him, that if any widows had children or nephews, who were able to take care of them, they ought to do it, and not suffer them to be chargeable to the church. This duty our text was intended to enforce.

Hence we learn, that a neglect to provide for our own households is inconsistent with true religion.

Persons guilty of such conduct, if they profess faith in Christ, by their works deny him. And they not only deny the faith which they profess; but are worse than infidels, or the unbelieving Pagans; because they acknowledge, and generally perform the duty of taking care of their own households; and professing christians have more light.

The text has been selected as the foundation of a discourse on the *duties* required in the *eighth commandment*, with respect to our *own estate.*

The eighth commandment is, "Thou shalt not steal." This commandment prohibits not only theft properly so called; but also all kinds of injustice and unmercifulness, with respect to the outward estate, whether of ourselves or others. And as in the commandments generally, the prohibition of any sin implies that the contrary duty is commanded; so in the eighth, the sins forbidden imply that the contrary duties are required.

The duties required in the eighth commandment, we have stated in our catechism, in the answer to the 74th question, as follows:

"*What is required in the eighth commandment?*

The eighth commandment requireth the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others."

The duties of this commandment according to this answer, relate either to our own estate, or to the estate of others. In regard to our own estate this commandment requires, that we, in a lawful manner, endeavour to procure and further our own wealth and outward estate; and in regard to the estate of others, it requires, that we, in a lawful manner endeavour to procure and further the wealth and outward estate of others.

The object of this discourse is, to illustrate the *duties*, which, according to this commandment, *we owe ourselves.*

It is our duty to endeavour to obtain a portion of the good things of this world, that we, and our families may be comfortable, and that we may have the means of assisting those who may need our aid, and of doing good in the world. We ought not to be greatly anxious about the things of this world, or to esteem them the chief good, or to pursue them to the neglect, or the breach of God's commandments; but it is not only permissible to seek after them in a lawful way; but it is our duty. This is taught in our text; "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." Jacob was anxious to provide for his own house; for he expostulated with Laban, saying, "When shall I provide for mine own house also;" Gen. xxx. 30, And Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "The parents ought to lay up for the children;" 2 Cor .xii. 14. The same duty is further evident from all the numerous exhortations we find in the Scriptures to administer of our substance to the relief and comfort of the needy, which we could not do if we had not of this world's goods. To acquire property, it is our duty to be industrious, frugal, and prudent in the management of our temporal affairs.

1. It is our duty to be *industrious.* Industry is a duty frequently taught in the Scriptures; and an indolent christian, is almost if not altogether a contradiction. That industry is a duty we are taught in the curse, which was pronounced upon man after the fall; "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground;" Gen. iii. 19. The duty of industry is also shown

in the following passages among others. "Not slothful in business;" Rom. xii. 11. "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer or ruler, provide their meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man;" Prov. vi. 6—11. "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat;" Prov. xiii. 4. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich;" Prov. x. 4. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men;" Prov. xxii. 29. "I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Yet a little sleep a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man;" Prov. xxiv. 30—34. "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth;" Eph. iv. 28. "If any would not work, neither should he eat. We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread;" 2 Thes. iii. 10, 12. In these passages, industry is enjoined as a duty, slothfulness is condemned, and the connexion of the former with a competency and affluence, and of the latter with poverty, is taught. A man ought to be engaged in some lawful business, and to be industrious in it.

And here a question is suggested. What is a lawful business or calling? I answer, that which will not necessarily lead to the neglect of any required duties, or to the breach of any of God's commandments. If a calling allow us no time or opportunity for the devotional duties of the closet, or of the family; if it lead to the breach of the Sabbath; if it must be followed by deceit, or falsehood, or dishonesty; or if it be connected with extortion and oppression,—it cannot be a lawful cal-

ling. Professing christians cannot engage in and pursue such callings with the approbation and blessing of God. And if God permit them to acquire property in such business, his curse will rest upon their gains.—Professing christians have no business with such callings.—Their souls cannot prosper while engaged in them. The language of such conduct is that they prefer the world to the approbation of God; and they who continue by their conduct to speak such language, can have no evidence that they are the people of God. The language of Christ to his professing people is—"Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead;" Mat. viii. 22.

While speaking of industry in some lawful calling as a duty, another question may properly be asked. May not a person who already is in possession of a competent and affluent estate, lawfully live in idleness, and not attend to any business? This question is answered in the negative; and especially if such persons be young or in active life. We sometimes see young men, who possess by inheritance large estates, living upon their income, in indolence and dissipation; and saying with the rich fool in the gospel. "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" Luk. xii. 19. Such conduct is altogether wrong. Whatever be our estate, industry in some lawful business is a duty. Industry is favourable to virtue and religion; whereas sloth is an incentive to many hurtful lusts, which render riches a snare and hinderance to spiritual welfare. And besides. we are stewards of God, and property is not given to us. to be expended merely on ourselves. God in his word charges the rich "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;" 1 Tim. vi. 18. If God in his providence, gives us more property than others, we are bound to excel others in doing good—relieving the distressed, supporting and extending religion, and promoting objects of public benevolence and utility. If any one should say, my property is already so large, that I can do all this, and yet live in indolence, he is answered; if some good can be done without care to improve property—by industry, which is suited to the nature of man, and conducive to health and virtue, still more good may be done. And God will certainly account with us, not only for the good we might have

done with the property we possessed; but also for the good we might have been enabled to do, with proper care and industry to improve the property put into our hands.

2. A second duty incumbent upon us in the acquisition of property is *frugality*. This is the opposite of profuseness. Frugality is opposed to the lavishing our property on improper objects; or consuming it to gratify our lusts; or living in a style which our circumstances will not bear, even if that style in other circumstances were lawful; or if our circumstances will bear it, living in an expensive style through ostentation or sensuality, while the poor are neglected. If we would do our duty, in acquiring property, it is not enough to be industrious, we ought also to be frugal. Many persons labour very hard, and yet continue poor, for want of frugality in their expenditures. The duty of frugality is taught in the following texts—"The substance of a diligent man is precious;" Prov. xii. 27. "He that is slothful in his work, is brother to him that is a great waster;" Prov. xviii. 9. "There is treasure to be desired, and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up;" Prov. xxi. 20. One thing for which the prodigal son was condemned was, he "wasted his substance with riotous living;" Luk. xv. 13. And our Saviour taught the duty of frugality, in his direction to his disciples after he had fed the five thousand; "Gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost;" John vi. 12.

If it be asked here, whether frugality is a duty incumbent on the rich as well as the poor? I answer, yes, to a certain degree. It is lawful to live comfortably, and to enjoy the good things that God may give us; but a profuseness in dress, equipage, meat, or drink, for the gratification of pride, or the indulgence of sensual appetites, is wicked. It was for these things, that the rich man in the parable was condemned. He "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day;" Luk. xvi. 19. Such sinful conduct is frequent among the rich. Many of them seem to forget, that they are the stewards of God, and accountable to him for the use they make of their property. Almost incalculable good might be done in the world, by what is lavished on costly dress, and equipage, and entertainments, merely for ostentation, or for the gratification of appetite. Oftentimes the superfluities

at a feast, would render comfortable, many suffering families among the poor. We find many persons in our world, who can expend hundreds and thousands for ostentation, and the gratification of their sensual appetites, who have little or nothing to give to the poor; and from whom no arguments or entreaties can draw a little for the promotion of religion, or of objects of public utility. Such persons, in the pride of their hearts may say, I have a right, to do with mine own as I please; yet they may rest assured that God will reckon with them for such a use of their property. And unless they repent of their conduct and change their course, they will finally receive the portion of the rich man.

3. Another duty to be attended to in the acquisition of property is a *prudent management* of our temporal affairs. A person may be industrious, and labour hard to acquire property, and he may be frugal, avoiding all profuseness; and yet he may continue poor, through want of prudent management. This every day's observation teaches. This prudent management includes a great many particulars more than I can name. It includes doing every thing in its proper season, embracing favourable opportunities to advance our property in a lawful way, redeeming the time, taking care of what we get, looking diligently to the ways of our household, and a great many other things of a like nature, which will naturally suggest themselves to a prudent and reflecting man, in the course of his business.

Thus I have pointed out and illustrated the duties which the eighth commandment requires, with respect to acquiring a competency of this world's goods. It is our duty to be industrious, frugal, and economical or prudent in the management of our temporal affairs. Such a course of conduct will generally procure a competency, and not unfrequently affluence. It is true, God, in the course of his providence, may, for wise and holy ends, prevent this effect. In this case, while we still continue to perform our duty it becomes us to acquiesce in the dispensations of providence, and to endeavour to make a wise use and improvement of them. And we ought always to remember that it is the blessing of God that maketh rich; that we are dependent on him in temporal as well as spiritual things; and that without his blessing, should we even have suc-

cess in business, and acquire property, our property would be cursed. Let us therefore ever feel our dependence on him for his blessing to give success to our lawful pursuits in business.

It may be further observed with respect to our own estate, it is our duty, not only to acquire in a lawful way, a competency of this world's goods; but also to preserve our property when it is acquired. And in order to this, in addition to the duties already pointed out, it is our duty to avoid as much as possible engaging in law-suits and suretiships. Persons of a litigious temper, oftentimes injure their estates by *law-suits*. It has been made a question whether law-suits are in any case morally lawful? The apostle Paul, on this subject, wrote to the Corinthians; "There is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" 1 Cor. vi. 7. And in our Saviour's sermon on the Mount we read; "If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also;" Mat. v. 40. These texts appear very strong against law-suits. But that they are not to be understood as forbidding them in all cases and all circumstances, appears from several considerations. To understand these texts in this absolute sense would be opening a door for oppression, and inviting the wicked to oppress the righteous. Besides it is certain that, under the Old Testament, God himself directed the appointment of judges to decide controversies; And Solomon said, "Strive not with a man without cause; Prov. iii. 30. Which implies that there is a lawful striving. The text above quoted must be explained in consistency with other parts of Scripture. In regard to the text quoted from the writings of the apostle Paul on the subject of law-suits; it appears from the context that he referred to law-suits carried on by christians before Heathen and infidel magistrates, whereby the christian religion was scandalized. And the meaning of the Apostle appears to be, that christians ought rather to make up their differences among themselves; and if their disputes could not otherwise be settled, rather to suffer wrong, than to do any thing to the prejudice of the gospel. But I do not suppose that the Apostle intended to forbid christians, in a christian community, and before christian

magistrates, to defend or recover their own by law, when they cannot otherwise do it. As to what our Saviour said, we may suppose he referred to small matters, in which it was better to lose a little than contend; and especially at that time, when from the prejudice that existed against his disciples, they could scarcely hope to have justice done them. However, both these texts teach us, as much as possible to avoid contention; and that it is better, especially in small matters; to suffer wrong than to contend. And indeed experience has proved, that very frequently persons would save property by so doing.—And christians certainly ought, as much as possible to avoid law-suits; and if after using every other means to obtain their right, they are compelled to have recourse to the law, they ought to conduct their law-suits with christian meekness and forbearance.

To preserve our property, *suretiships* are also, as much as possible, to be avoided. Becoming surety for others is very often followed by ruinous consequences. In the Proverbs of Solomon we read, "My son if thou be surety for thy friend, if thou hast stricken thy hand with a stranger—Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth. Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself, when thou art come into the hand of thy friend; go, humble thyself and make sure thy friend. Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids. Deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler;"—Prov. ix. 1—5. "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretiship is sure:"—Prov. xi. 15. The truth of these texts many have known by sad experience.

Once more, it is our duty to *use* our estate to render ourselves and families comfortable. For not only does he fall short of his duty and break the eighth commandment, who through his want of industry, frugality, or economy, has not wherewith to render his family comfortable; but he also, who has of this world's goods, and yet through penuriousness, and a miserly disposition, suffers them to want. There are some such beings in the world, but we hope they are rare.

To conclude—are there any present who provide not for their own households? Whose families are suffering

for want of the necessaries of life, or who have not its comforts? What is the cause of this? Is it through your neglect or misconduct? Or while you are making every proper effort, does Providence render all your attempts abortive? This last may sometimes, but we have reason to believe, very seldom, be the cause. The fault generally lies in the persons themselves. They are idle, or they want frugality, or they are destitute of economy, or they have made, or keep themselves poor by improper litigations, or suretiships, or in some such way.

Let idle drones, who are lounging away their time, while their families suffer, unless the industrious and benevolent assist them; let those who neglect the duties of frugality and economy at home, and perhaps not only this, but spend abroad what little they get, while their families are suffering; and let all whose families are deprived of comforts, or suffer through their fault, remember, that their conduct is very criminal in the sight of God, who has declared, "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

SERMON LXXXII.

DUTIES OF THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

MICAH IV. 8. MIDDLE CLAUSE.

"*To do justly and to love mercy.*"

The Lord had a controversy with the people of Israel for their sins. This the prophet had made known to them in the beginning of the chapter. Hence the Israelites, probably because they were alarmed at this declaration, inquired how they might avert the wrath, and obtain the favour of God: "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a

year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" To these questions the prophet replied; "He hath shewed thee, O man what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" These words embrace the sum of revealed religion. They teach us to render to God and man their just due, to be kind towards our fellow-men, and with humility, sensible that we are sinners, to walk with God in all his commandments.

The part of the verse which has been chosen as our text, viz. "to do justly, and to love mercy," embraces the duties required in the eighth commandment, in relation to the outward estate of others.

"*The eighth commandment requireth, the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.*"

We have illustrated the duties of this commandment in relation to our own wealth and outward estate. We come now to consider the duties of the same commandment as they regard the *wealth and outward estate of others.*

These duties are divided into those of justice and mercy.

1. *Justice.* The eighth commandment requires that we do justly. Justice, as it relates to the estate of others, may be considered the same as honesty. A christian must be a just or honest man; and although honesty can never save us, as many vainly suppose, yet we cannot be saved without it. And although it may exist, without a saving faith in Christ, and therefore in a person who is still under condemnation, and a child of wrath; yet where there is true faith in Christ, there will be honesty or justice in our dealings, as its fruit. And that man's religion is vain whatever be his professions, who is unjust or dishonest in his dealings with his fellow-men.

Let us describe the character of the honest man; and then show that honesty is a part of true religion. The rule of the strictly honest man is, always in his dealings with mankind, to do to others, as he would that they in exchange of circumstances should do to him. Following this rule, when he purchases commodities, he does not

endeavour to sink them in the estimation of the owner, that he may take advantage of his credulity, and get them below their value. Neither when he wishes to purchase, does he take advantage of another's ignorance or necessity, to procure his commodities at a price beneath their value. He does not deceive others in selling, by crying up his goods above their value, or concealing their defects. He does not keep false weights and measures.—He does not buy or borrow, with a view never to pay; or when he knows it is very doubtful, whether he ever will be able to pay, while at the same time he conceals his situation from his creditors. He is faithful to the trusts reposed in him, and does not take advantage of forms of law, to withhold from his neighbour his just due. He does not dispute the debts which he knows to be just. He does not, when he is able to pay his just debts, delay payment, to the disappointment, and injury of his creditors; or put them to the trouble and expense of a law-suit to recover their just due. In short, in all his dealings with others, that rule already quoted is his guide, to do to others, as he would that others should do to him.

The proofs in Scripture that justice or honesty is a christian duty, and necessary to the christian character are numerous. We shall quote some of them. In the Mosaic law we read, "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour. Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin, shall ye have;" Lev. xix. 13, 35, 36. "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have. For all that do such things and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God;" Deut. xxv. 13—16. The wise man in his Proverbs tells us, "To do justice, is more acceptable to the Lord, than sacrifice;" Prov. xxi. 3. "A false balance is abomination to the Lord; but a just weight is his delight;"—Prov. xi. 1. "Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the Lord. Divers weights are an abomination to the Lord: and a false balance is not good;" Prov. xx. 10, 23. And he condemns the too common practice of depreciating things that we wish to

buy that we may get them below their value. "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth;" Prov. xx. 14. The prophet Micah declares in our text, that one of the principal things which God requires of us, is "to do justly." And in some following verses of the same chapter, we hear the Lord asking, "Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" In the prophecy of Malachi the Lord says, "I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right;" Mal. iii. 5. Our Saviour directed, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" Mat. vii. 12. And Paul in his epistles, frequently spoke on this subject. Thus he directed the Romans, "Provide things *honest* in the sight of all men;" Rom. xii. 17. "Let us walk *honestly* as in the day;" Rom. xiii. 13. To the Corinthians he wrote, blaming some of them, "You do wrong, and defraud;" 1 Cor. vi. 8. And he exhorted the whole church, "providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men;" 2 Cor. viii. 21. The Philippians he exhorted, "Whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just—think on these things;" Phil. iv. 8. And he cautioned the Thessalonians, "that no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such;" 1 Thes. iv. 6.

From all these passages, we must be convinced of the importance of justice or honesty, in all our dealings with others; and that the religion of a dishonest man is vain.

But here it may be important to caution against a dangerous error, which some entertain. Many make the whole of religion to consist in honesty, and on this foundation build their hopes of future happiness. This is a most dangerous error. Faith in Christ, which is the act of a renewed heart, and by which Christ is received and rested upon, for pardon and acceptance, as he is offered in the gospel, is indispensably necessary to salvation. Without this faith, according to the Scriptures, a man must perish. Now a man may be honest in his dealings with

the world, and yet be destitute of this faith; and therefore a man may be honest, and yet perish. But at the same time, we must remark, that although a man may have honesty without true faith, he cannot have true faith without honesty. Faith will produce this fruit; for faith without works is dead. But while the true believer is an honest man, he will renounce all dependence on his honesty, as the ground of his acceptance with God, and depend solely on the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under the head of justice in our dealings with others, is also included *restitution of property*, which of right belongs to another. Reason teaches that we should render to every man his own. And the duty is frequently taught in the word of God, as in the following passages; Ex. xxii. 1, &c.; "If a man steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox; and four sheep for a sheep. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double. If a man shall cause a field or vineyard to be eaten, and shall put in his beast, and shall feed in another man's field: of the best of his own field, and of the best of his own vineyard shall he make restitution. If fire break out, and catch in thorns, so that the stacks of corn, or the standing corn, or the field be consumed therewith; he that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution. For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his; the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his neighbour." The same duty of restitution is enjoined, Lev. vi. 2—5; "If a soul sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, and lie unto his neighbour in that which was deliverered him to keep, or in fellowship, or in a thing taken away by violence, or hath deceived his neighbour; or have found that which was lost, and lieth concerning it, and sweareth falsely; in any of all these that a man doth sinning therein: Then it shall be because he hath sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore that which he took violently away, or the thing which he hath deceitfully gotten, or that which was delivered him to keep, or the lost thing which he found, of all that about which he hath sworn falsely; he shall even

restore it in the principal, and shall add the fifth part more thereto, and give it unto him to whom it appertaineth." The prophet Samuel when he asserted his integrity before the people, said, 1 Sam. xii. 3; "Behold, here I am, witness against me before the Lord, and before his anointed; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." And Zacheus the publican, when he received Christ joyfully into his house, and embraced his religion, "stood and said unto the Lord, Behold Lord—if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold;" Luk. xix. 8. This determination was approved by Christ. From these passages the duty of restitution is plain.

There are many ways in which a person may come into the possession of his neighbour's property. It is sometimes obtained by theft; sometimes by deceit or fraud; sometimes by a breach of trust, sometimes by finding that which was lost, and knowing the owner; and sometimes by a course of law, when for want of due evidence, property has been wrested from the real owner, when the person who received it, knew in his own mind that he had no right to it; in all these cases, and in every other case, where a person has obtained the property of another, it is his duty to make restitution. And the least restitution which ought to be made, is the whole of the principal, together with a reasonable compensation for its use. Until this is done, our neighbour has not his right; we detain from him that which is his; and guilt must lie upon our consciences, unless the rightful owner voluntarily declines receiving his own. Then the property becomes ours by gift.

And here I would observe, that in cases of *failure for debt*, we have reason to believe much fraud is frequently practised. No doubt honest men have sometimes failed. When they contracted their debts, they had a fair prospect of paying them; but by adverse providences and unforseen events, they were disappointed. But we have reason to believe, many contract debts, far beyond what they have any prospect of paying; and even when they know that they must fail; and when they have no inten-

tion of paying. Such conduct is certainly, in the sight of God, highly unjust and criminal; and the more so as deceit has been added to injustice. But whatever may have been a person's conduct previous to his failure, there can be no doubt, that he is bound in equity, and by the laws of religion, however he may be cleared by human laws, if he ever becomes able, to make restitution, and pay all his debts, with a reasonable allowance for the loss which his creditors may have sustained. This, and nothing short of this is strict honesty; and until this is done, guilt must lie on the conscience of the man who once has failed, and who has since acquired sufficient property to discharge his debts, unless his creditors voluntarily release him from his obligation, and refuse to receive restitution. Alas! but few, we have reason to fear, do their duty in this business. Many who once failed become affluent and live in luxury ,while their creditors are straitened and poor, for want of that which they have taken and withhold from them. Surely such conduct must be very offensive to a righteous God.

Be exhorted, my hearers to attend to this subject of restitution. Have you in any way come into the possession of property, which you know belongs to another and not to you? Go and make restitution. This is your duty; and you have no right to hope that you are in favour with God while you refuse to do it.

II. We proceed to the second class of duties contained in our text, and belonging to the eighth commandment, in relation to our neighbour's wealth and outward estate; viz. *mercy*. It is our duty not only "to do justly;" but also "to love mercy." It is our duty to assist others, who may stand in need of our aid.

This we may do by our counsels, pointing out to them wherein they are conducting disadvantageously, or injuriously, and instructing them in the best modes of doing business; by lending them aid, when we have a reasonable prospect of being repaid; and by using our influence, when we have opportunity, to get them into business. In this way many have furthered the prosperity of others.

It is also our duty to endeavour to save the property of others when we see it taking injury. This duty is taught in the following passage, Deut. xxii. 1—3; "Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and

hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass, and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost things of thy brother's which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise; thou mayest not hide thyself." And even if the owner be our enemy, it is our duty to endeavour to save his property from injury, as we learn from the following passage; Ex. xxiii. 4. 5; "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him."

Another way in which it is our duty to assist others, is by contributing of the substance which God has given us, for their relief and support, when they are distressed and poor. The duty of liberality to the poor is very frequently enjoined in the Scriptures, and even declared to be essential to the christian character. We shall quote some of the many texts on this subject. In the Mosaic law we read, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee;" Lev. xxv. 35. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land;" Deut. xv. 7—11. The Psalmist describing the godly man saith, "He is ever merciful and lendeth; and his seed is blessed;" Ps. xxxvii. 26. "A good man showeth favour and lendeth.—He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; Ps. cxii.

5, 9. And he declares, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. He shall be blessed upon the earth:" Ps. xli. 1, 2. The wise man saith "he that hath mercy on the poor happy is he. He that oppresseth the poor, reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor;" Prov. xiv. 21, 31. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again;" Prov. xix. 17. The New Testament abounds with similar instructions. Our Saviour taught, "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" Acts xx. 35. Paul exhorted the Romans, "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink:" Rom. xii. 20. He wrote to the Corinthians, "God loveth a cheerful giver;" 2 Cor. ix. 7. And he charged the Hebrews, "To do good, and to communicate forget not" and added, "for with such sacrifices, God is well pleased;" Heb. xiii. 16. And the apostle John was very pointed on this subject. "Whoso hath this world's good and seeth his brother need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him;" 1 John iii. 17.

From these passages we learn that liberality to the poor is a duty incumbent on all those who have the means; that a blessing is connected with the right performance of this duty: and that the habitual neglecters of it, have not the love of God in them.

Liberality, to be acceptable must flow from right principles, such as compassion to the poor, a sense of duty, and a regard to God's authority and glory. There is such a thing as giving all our goods to feed the poor, and yet continuing destitute of the favour of God, because the principle of action is wrong. The principle being good, our liberality ought to be performed promptly or without delay, when our neighbour is in distress. As saith Solomon, "Say not unto thy neighbour, go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give thee, when thou hast it by thee;" Prov. iii. 28.

It ought to be done as secretly as may be, without a desire to be seen of men, or commended by them. As our Saviour directed; "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in

secret, himself shall reward thee openly;" Mat. vi. 3, 4. It ought to be done cheerfully, as saith Paul, "Not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver;" Prov. ix. 7. In determining what proportion of our substance we ought to give to the poor, we must be governed in some measure by the circumstances of our estate and family, and the necessities of the poor. Taking these into consideration, and attending to the word and providences of God to direct us, we must be left to our own consciences to determine, as stewards of God, and accountable to him.

As to the proper objects of charity we may observe, that it is not our duty, to encourage idleness, and sloth, and support those who, while they are able, are too indolent to labour. It is true many families are brought into distress through the idleness or intemperance of one or both the heads thereof. In this case, when they are actually suffering, it is our duty to endeavour to relieve them; but at the same time we ought to endeavour to do them still more good, by labouring to bring them into industrious, temperate, and frugal habits.

We have also many strolling poor, who at our doors ask our charity. I believe it is very seldom indeed, our duty to give such. In our country, provision is made for the poor, and they seldom if ever have reason to travel about in this manner. Besides many of them take this method to support themselves because they are too indolent to gain a livelihood by honest labour. And many of them are impostors, who come to us with lies in their mouths, and expend our charity to procure the means of intemperance. Such persons ought to be discouraged and frowned upon; and we ought to have good evidence indeed that a strolling person is a proper object of charity, before we bestow any thing upon him, which he can expend in this way.

The industrious poor among us, and especially the poor of the household of faith, who have been reduced or kept poor, by adverse providences, most of all claim our assistance.

To conclude; let us be influenced by strict justice in all our dealings with the world; and let us love mercy and ever be ready, according as the Lord has prospered us, to do good unto others, and administer to the necessities of the destitute.—Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.

SINS AGAINST THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 15.

"*Thou shalt not steal.*"

We have in former discourses attended to an illustration of the duties required in the eighth commandment; we come now in course to consider the *sins forbidden* by this commandment. These include, not only actual theft, but also all improper conduct with respect to our own and our neighbour's outward estate.

These sins are summarily expressed in the answer to the 75th question of our Shorter Catechism.

"*What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?*

The eighth commandment forbiddeth whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate."

According to this answer, the sins forbidden in this commandment may be divided into two great classes, viz. those against our own estate, and those against the estate of others.

In the first class we may reckon idleness, prodigality, all indiscreet management of our temporal affairs, covetousness, and all improper ways of enriching ourselves, or of using our estate.

In the second class we may enumerate theft, removing land-marks, dishonesty, oppression, extortion, and usury.

Of each of these particular sins, we shall treat in their order.

I. The *sins* against the eighth commandment, in regard to our *own estate.* And

1. *Idleness.* In a former discourse, on the duties required in this commandment, industry was proved to be a duty; it therefore follows of course, that idleness, which is its opposite is a sin. Besides, this is proved by the declarations of Scripture; "Go to the ant thou sluggard (saith Solomon)

consider her ways and be wise. How long wilt thou sleep O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man;" Prov. vi. 6, 9, 10, 11. I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding: And lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down: yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep; so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man;" Prov. xxiv. 30. 34.— Paul exhorted the Romans to be, "not slothful in business." Rom. xii. 11. These and several other texts condemn idleness, and prove that it is a sin.

2. Another sin against the eighth commandment, in reference to our own estate, is *prodigality*, or a wasting our property, by lavishing it on improper objects. or by consuming it to gratify our lusts, or by living in a style which our circumstances will not bear. Frugality has been proved to be a duty, and therefore prodigality which is its opposite is a sin. And in Scripture the spendthrift is called a "foolish man;" Prov. xxi. 20. And the waster is said to be brother to him that is slothful in his work; Prov. xviii. 9. And prodigality was one principal thing for which the prodigal son was condemned.

3. Another sin against the eighth commandment in reference to our own estate is an *indiscreet management* of our temporal affairs. This is the opposite of economy, and includes several particulars, such as neglecting the proper and most advantageous season in which to do business, doing it in an improper and disadvantageous manner, carelessness about what we already possess, negligence in looking well to the ways of our household, and such like particulars.

4. Another sin against this commandment, in reference to our own estate is *covetousness*. By this we understand as it relates to this commandment, avarice, or an inordinate disire after and love of riches. It is lawful to desire property, to make exertions to obtain it, and to value it when possessed, that we and our families may be comfortable, and that we may be useful in the world. But this lawful desire after property is moderate. It is not the

principal desire; and it is kept in subordination to the glory of God. But whenever the desire of property passes this bound, and becomes immoderate; whenever we set our hearts upon wealth, so as to esteem it the chief good, and have such an insatiable desire after it that we cannot be satisfied; when we feel determined to have it, even though in obtaining it we should neglect and break God's commandments; and when disappointment makes us repine—then our desires after wealth become sinful. They are inordinate and covetous.

Covetousness is a sin very common in our world; and perhaps there is no sin of equal criminality, that men are less sensible of, or that less wounds the conscience.—And, perhaps, it is a sin, that as much, if not more than any other, entirely governs the man who indulges it, and steels his heart against the impressions of true religion.—It is a desire that gains strength with age. It remains and grows stronger, when almost every other propensity has, by the decay of nature, become weaker or extinct. It is a sin which oftentimes leads to the perpetration of other sins and to very evil consequences. And it is a sin into which professors of religion, sometimes fall, and which they cherish and which it is exceedingly difficult to convince them of, and persuade them to renounce. That covetousness is a sin, and very offensive to God, the Scriptures very clearly and repeatedly teach. In the Psalms we read, "the wicked blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth;" Ps. x. 3. Our Saviour exhorted, "take heed and beware of covetousness;" Luk. xii. 15. Paul in his epistles has given frequent warnings against this sin, and taught its heinousness. He charged the Corinthians, "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be covetous, with such an one, no not to eat;" 1 Cor. v. 11. And in the same epistle, he included in a catalogue, which he gave of characters who should not inherit the kingdom of God, the covetous; 1 Cor. vi. 10. To the Ephesians he wrote, "this ye know that no covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God;" Eph. v. 5. To the Colossians he wrote, "mortify your members which are upon the earth —covetousness which is idolatry: for which thing's sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience;" Col. iii. 5, 6. And in that group of wicked char-

acters, which he informed Timothy should appear in the last days and make perilous times, the covetous are included; 2 Tim. iii. 2. From these texts it clearly appears that covetousness is a great sin. For it is ranked with the most heinous sins; it is a sin which God peculiarly abhorreth; it is idolatry; and it excludes from the kingdom of heaven. The evils and danger of this sin, and that it leads to other sins we are taught in the following passages. It was one of the leading sins which caused the judgments of God upon the Jews, when he sent them into captivity in Babylon; as said the Lord by Jeremiah, "Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them; for every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to covetousness; Jer. viii. 10. The prophet Micah taught, that this sin frequently leads to oppression and violence, when cherished by those who have power. "They covet fields (said he) and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away; so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage;" Mic. ii. 2. Solomon taught that this sin sometimes leads to murder, in the following passage. "They say come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause. We shall find all precious substance; we shall fill our houses with spoil. Their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood. So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain: which taketh away the life of the owners thereof;" Prov. i. 11, 13, 16, 19. Paul also, 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10; taught the great danger, and the evil consequences of this sin. "They that will be rich (said he) fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."—These texts teach us the danger of this vice, and solemnly caution us against it.

And the Scriptures furnish many examples, which show the great evil of this sin, its tendency to lead to other sins, and its dangerous consequences: and which serve as warnings to us to beware of covetousness. This was the ruling passion of Laban; and it led him to such mean and wicked actions, as has rendered his character odious and

contemptible in the eyes of all future generations. It led him to sell his daughters in marriage; to keep his son-in-law in servitude for many years; to deceive him; to change his wages ten times; to oppress him in such a manner that he had finally to flee from him; and then to pursue him, with intentions to injure him. Covetousness was also the ruling passion of Balaam, and it led him to go to Balak in opposition to the will of God; and afterwards to give counsel to corrupt the children of Israel, which finally issued in a war, in which Balaam lost his life. It was this passion, that led Achan at the taking of Jericho, to take and secrete for himself, some of the spoils of the city, contrary to the express command of God, which conduct issued in his own death, and the death of all his family. This passion led the sons of Samuel to take bribes, and pervert judgment. The same passion led Judas to betray his Master, the consequence of which was suicide. And it was covetousness that led Demas to renounce religion. These examples are held up to us as warnings to beware of covetousness. And the history of the world also furnishes us with many examples, of the odiousness, evils and danger of this passion. It has led to oppression, extortion dishonesty, theft, murder and almost every vice. It has desolated whole countries. It has often rendered the wretch that cherished it an unhappy mortal. It has sometimes under disappointments driven him to distraction and suicide. And it has destroyed thousands of souls, throughout eternity.

Are any of you my hearers under the influence of this passion? Examine yourselves carefully and impartially, and admit a conviction of the truth. And if there be a covetous man present, let him consider the sinfulness, evil, and danger of cherishing this passion. Above all let him remember that covetousness is idolatry, and excludes from the kingdom of heaven. And let him mortify this corruption, and suffer it no more to influence his conduct.

5. We observe again in reference to our own estate, that we break the eighth commandment, by all *improper methods of enriching ourselves, and of using our estate*, when we possess it. There are many sinful ways of enriching ourselves, in some of which we break the eighth commandment, not only in reference to our own estate. but also to the estate of others, by encroaching on their rights. Pur-

suing an unlawful calling is a sinful way of acquiring an estate. By unlawful callings are meant such, as necessarily lead to a neglect of required duties, or a breach of God's commandments. Pursuing a lawful calling in an unlawful manner is also an improper way of acquiring property. This is very frequently done, as for instance, by those, who are so intent on their secular business, that they cannot find time to attend to the duties of the closet, the family, and the sanctuary, in their proper seasons; and by those who pursue their worldly business, either themselves, or by those in their employ on the Sabbath day. Property is also sometimes acquired by dishonesty, oppression, extortion, usury and theft. By such practices, persons sin, both in relation to their own estate, and the estate of others.

I mention one other sinful way of acquiring property, which is frequently taken, and that is gaming or gambling in all its different forms. Several reasons may be offered to show that this practice is sinful. In all games of chance as they are called, there is the use of the lot, which is an implicit appeal to Providence, who is the disposer of the lot. And it is sinful on a trifling occasion, and in such an irreverent manner to make an appeal to providence. Besides, gambling excites the sinful passion of avarice, irritates the temper, provokes to other crimes such as profaneness, and fraud, and sometimes leads to suicide.

But what more especially belongs to our present subject is that it is a sin against the eighth commandment. Gamblers who win, thereby injure their neighbour's property, and perhaps ruin him, and his family also, if he has one. And they who lose, thereby injure their own property, and not unfrequently ruin themselves, and render their families wretched. Another evidence of the wickedness of this practice is, the character in a moral and religious respect of the whole tribe of professed gamblers. Let all beware of this practice in all its forms. And if there be any present addicted to it, let them forsake it as they regard the favour of God and their own happiness.

Thus I have pointed out some improper ways of enriching, or of endeavouring to enrich ourselves. I would further remark, that we break this commandment, by an improper use of our estate when we possess it. A prodigal

use of it is wrong; and so also is a using it as a means of oppression; and further we sin by a miserly hoarding it up; denying ourselves and families the comforts of life; and refusing to assist the poor and needy: and to promote objects of benevolence, public utility, and religion. We proceed to the

III. Class of sins against this commandment, viz. *those practices which do or may unjustly hinder our neighbour's wealth or outward estate.* And,

1. *Theft.* By this is meant secretly taking what belongs to another, with a view to devote it to our own use. If violence be used the act becomes robbery. Theft is against the express letter of this commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." This is a peculiarly disgraceful sin among men. A more disgraceful character in the opinion of the world can scarcely be given to a person, than that he or she is a thief. This sin is frequently forbidden in the Scriptures under heavy penalties. Under the Mosaic law the thief was required to make heavy restitution.—God by the mouth of his prophet Zechariah pronounced a curse against the thief, "Behold a flying roll—This is the curse that goeth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it. I will bring it forth saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof;" Zech. v. 1, 3, 4. Paul includes thieves, in that catalogue of characters, which he excludes from the kingdom of heaven. Theft therefore of every kind is a very heinous sin. It is disgraceful among men; it exposes to human punishments; and it is very offensive to God, and will, unless repented of and forsaken, exclude from the happiness of heaven. Therefore, in the words of the Apostle, "Let him that stole, steal no more;" Eph. iv. 28.

On this subject, I would further observe, that the worst kind of theft is that which is denominated man-stealing. This by the Mosaic law was punished with death. As we read, Ex. xxi. 16; "He that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death."

We may observe again while on the subject of theft, that, as it is a breach of this commandment to steal, so is it also, knowingly to receive that which has been stolen,

The receiver is partaker with the thief in his crime. In the charge which the Lord makes against the wicked in Psalm l. 16. we have these words, "When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him." And Prov. xxix. 24, we read, "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul."

2. Another sin in reference to our neighbour's estate, forbidden in this commandment, is *removing our neighbour's land mark*. Thus we read, Prov. xxiii. 10; "Remove not the old land-mark; and enter not into the fields of the fatherless." Deut. xix. 14; "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's land-mark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance." And Deut. xxvii. 17; cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's land-mark; and all the people shall say, Amen."

3. Another sin included in this commandment in regard to the estate of others is *dishonesty*. This sin includes a great many particulars. In general it is a breach, in our commerce with the world, of the following rule given by our Saviour; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;" Mat. vii. 12. Whenever we transgress this rule, in our dealings with men, we act dishonestly. To mention some particulars. He is a dishonest man, who takes advantage of another's credulity or ignorance, to purchase his commodities beneath their value, or to sell his own goods above their price. False weights and measures, and all deception in trade, are dishonest. He is a dishonest man who buys or borrows with an intention never to pay, or when he knows it is very doubtful whether he ever will be able to pay. He is a dishonest man who puts his property out of his hands, to prevent the payment of his just debts. He is a dishonest man, who in drawing any contract in writing, purposely omits or inserts a clause, of which advantage may be taken in law to the detriment of the other party. And all taking advantage of forms of law, to withhold or wrest from another his right, is dishonest; and so also is all unfaithfulness to the trusts reposed in us. These are some of the instances in which dishonesty is practised. There are a great many more. A good rule by which to determine in particular cases, whether an action be dishonest or not, is to ask ourselves, whether we would judge it to be strictly right in our

neighbour to act towards us in this manner. All deceit and fraud and unrighteousness are frequently condemned in the Scriptures, and the contrary is required. It is unnecessary to point you to particular passages. Dishonesty in a greater or less degree is a common sin. But it is a sin which is injurious to the well-being of society, offensive to God, and destructive to the souls of men. The habitual practice of this sin is inconsistent with the christian character; and in vain do any pretend to religious experiences and joys, and make a great profession of sanctity, while they can over-reach and deceive their neighbours in their dealings with them.

The consideration of the remaining sins against this commandment, which were mentioned, viz. oppression, extortion, and usury, must be postponed until another opportunity.

In the conclusion of this discourse, I would exhort you, and charge mine own soul, while we attend to an illustration of the commandments of God, to examine ourselves, and compare our hearts and lives with what the holy law of God requires; and we shall undoubtedly find, that in many things we all offend. Let us remember that the law is spiritual. Let us admit conviction of sin where we are guilty. Let us remember that the law pronounces, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" Gal. iii. 10. Let this teach us that we are condemned by the law, and stand in need of a Saviour. Let a knowledge of ourselves in contrast with the divine law, drive us to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth, that we may be justified, through his perfect righteousness. And let us never forget that although by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified, nevertheless, the law continues to be the rule of duty; that "he that doeth righteousness, is righteous;" 1 John iii. 7. And that without "holiness," or a sincere obedience to the divine commandments, "no man shall see the Lord;" Heb. xii. 14.

SERMON LXXXIV.

OPPRESSION, EXTORTION AND USURY.

EZEKIEL XXII. 12; MIDDLE CLAUSE.

"*Thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion.*"

In this chapter the prophet gives a catalogue of the sins of the Jews, which had provoked the heavy judgments of the Lord. In this catalogue are contained, the sins mentioned in our text, viz. extortion and usury.

In the last discourse on the eighth commandment, a number of sins against this commandment, were mentioned all of which were then considered, except the sins of oppression, extortion, and usury. The object of this discourse is to treat of these sins.

Oppression and *extortion* are nearly allied, and may be reduced to the same head. Extortion is by civilians defined to be, "an abuse of public justice, by any officer's unlawfully taking under colour of his office, from any man, any money or thing of value that is not due to him, or more than is due, or before it is due."* But the Scriptures seem not thus to restrict the term; but to extend it to persons not in office, as well as to those who are. Thus in our text not only the rulers, but the inhabitants generally of the city of Jerusalem, are charged with extortion. Extortion in a Scriptural sense appears to be, wresting our neighbour's property from him, either by fraud or by force. Oppression includes extortion, but it goes further; for we may oppress our neighbour, by withholding his right from him, as well as by taking it away.

We shall in treating of these sins, consider them together; and as oppression includes extortion, shall make use of the former term.

Taking advantage of our neighbour's necessities, to compel him to give an exorbitant price for what he pur-

*Blackstone.

chases is oppression. Engrossing or monopolizing commodities which are the necessaries of life, and then exacting an exorbitant price, especially of the poor, is great oppression. This is what is called in Scripture "grinding the faces of the poor;" Is. iii. 15. Wresting from our neighbour by violence that which is his, because we are more powerful than he, and because he is afraid to contend with us; also taking advantage of forms of law to wrest or withhold from our neighbour his property; and further the putting another to the trouble and expense of a law-suit to gain his own right, and protracting the suit to as great length as we can, to run him to as much expense as possible, are oppression. This last is a common mode of oppression, and it is a grievous one, and especially if the person thus wronged be poor, and unable to bear the expense incident to a tedious suit at law. But we cannot further particularize. Suffice it to say that every kind of wresting or withholding from our neighbour, his property, whether by fraud or by force, is oppression.

Every kind of oppression, and especially of the poor and more helpless is forbidden in the word of God, and the oppressors are severely threatened. Thus we read, Lev. xxv. 14; "If thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour's hand, ye shall not oppress one another." The wickedness and danger of oppression are very frequently pointed out in Scripture. It was one of the sins, for which, as we learn from our text, and elsewhere, God sent his judgments upon the Jews, when their land was desolated, and the inhabitants were either slain or carried captive by the Chaldeans. Zophar in the book of Job speaking of the wicked, said, "Because he hath oppressed and hath forsaken the poor: because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not: surely he shall not feel quietness; God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him;" Job xx. 19, 20, 23. Solomon said, "He that oppresseth the poor, to increase his riches, shall surely come to want;" Prov. xxii. 16. "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker;" Prov. xiv. 31. "Wo unto them (said Isaiah) that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth;" Is. iv. 8. "Wo unto them that decree

unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness, which they have prescribed ; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless ;" Is. x. 1, 2. In the prophecy of Amos we read, " Hear this O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, when will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat ? The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein ?" Am. viii. 4—8. The Lord declared by the mouth of the prophet Malachi, " I will come near to you to judgment, and I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right ;" Mal. iii. 5. Our Saviour pronounced a woe against the scribes and Pharisees, because they devoured widow's houses, and were within, full of extortion, Mat. xxiii. 14, 25. The apostle Paul placed extortioners among those who cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; 1 Cor. vi. 10. And the apostle James denounced the judgments of God against oppressors ; " Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth : and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth ;" Jam. v. 1, 4. From these texts, the wickedness and danger of oppression and extortion are evident.

Before we leave this subject, we may remark, how good is God, that he befriends the weak and oppressed ! How good are his laws, which thus respect and guard the rights of all his creatures ! And how unreasonable is it, to reject, or hate, or disregard these laws which are so well calculated to promote universal happiness. Let a sense of the excellence of God's law lead us ever to love and obey it. And let oppressors and extortioners remember, that although they may be above the reach of human laws, or

may evade them, there is one higher than the highest, who notices their conduct, and to whom it is most displeasing; and who will one day judge the cause of the oppressed, and punish the oppressor; and let them repent, and break off their sins by righteousness.

We proceed to the consideration of the other sin mentioned in our text: viz. *Usury.*

By *usury* we understand in general, the compensation which the owner of any thing receives for its use. The term is more especially appropriated to express the compensation received for the use of money. On this subject there has been and still is a diversity of opinions. Some have supposed all interest for the use of money to be morally unlawful. From Ecclesiastical history we learn that usury, by which most probably is, for the most part, meant, all interest, has been condemned by Ecclesiastical councils, both of primitive and of later times. Many of the Roman Catholic divines, and especially the schoolmen, as they were called, also held all interest to be morally unlawful. And the Canon law, which contains the opinions of the ancient Latin fathers, and the decrees of general Councils, and of the Popes, forbids any interest for money, and pronounces it a mortal sin.

The same opinion, that all interest is morally unlawful, was held by some of the Protestant divines, about the time of the Reformation. Among these we find the name of the justly celebrated Swiss reformer, Zuinglius. The same opinion has been held by several eminent divines since. Hence it will be important to inquire whether it is ever morally lawful for the lender to take any interest of the borrower?

All the texts of Scripture which I have been able to find, in which the subject of usury is introduced, and I believe I have found them all, are the following, Ex. xxii. 25; "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury." Lev. xxv. 35, 36, 37; "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee; then thou shalt relieve him: yea though he be a stranger or a sojourner; that he may live with thee. Take thou no usury of him, or increase; but fear thy God; that thy brother may live with thee. Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase."

Deut. xxiii. 19. 20; "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury. Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury, but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury." This is all that is said upon the subject in the law of Moses. The next place we find the subject mentioned is in the fifth chapter of Nehemiah.—The passage is too long to quote entire. The substance of it is as follows. There was a great scarcity of provisions in Judea and the taxes laid by the Persian government were high. Hence the poorer class of people were obliged to borrow money of their richer brethren, for which they charged them an interest of the 100th part, which is supposed to be per month, equal to 12 per cent a year; and to secure the payment of what they thus borrowed, they had to give mortgages on their houses and lands.—This soon reduced the borrowers to poverty and distress. The lenders had got their lands, and they were likely to get their children for slaves. In their distress, they cried to Nehemiah the governor. He immediately assembled together those who were guilty of this oppression, and said unto them, "Ye exact usury every one of his brother;" and having expostulated with them, and shown them the evil of their conduct, he added, "I pray you let us leave off this usury. Restore I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their olive yards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil that ye exact of them. Then said they, we will restore them, and will require nothing of them." Psalm xv. 5; The Psalmist gave this as a trait of the character of the good man. "He putteth not out his money to usury." Prov. xxviii. 8; we read, "He that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor." Jer. xv. 10; The prophet speaking of the contentions of the world with him, observed, "I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me." The next place in which we find the subject mentioned, is in the 18th Chapter of Ezekiel. The prophet describing the just man, said, in the 8th verse—"He that hath not given forth upon usury, neither hath taken any increase." Again describing the wicked man, he gave in the 13th verse,

this as a trait in his character—"Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase." And in the 17th verse speaking of a good son of a wicked father, he said, "That hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase." The same subject is again mentioned in our text. "Thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by extortion." These are all the passages on the subject in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the word usury is but twice mentioned. First in Mat. xxv. 27; in the parable of the talents committed to the servants. The master is represented as saying to the unprofitable servant, when reckoning with him, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." The other place in which it is mentioned, is in the same parable; Luk. xix. 23.

In answering the question whether any interest be morally lawful, it will be important to settle the meaning of usury in those passages of Scripture, where the word is used. The original word used in the Old Testament, which is rendered usury in our translation, is, I believe, in all the passages quoted, except the one in Nehemiah, derived from a root, which signifies *to bite as a serpent.* The original word in Nehemiah signifies a *burden*; in all the other places, a biting as of a serpent. Hence some have infered, that it is not all interest which is forbidden, and which is called usury; but only that which proves a burden or oppressive; or that which bites as a serpent, or wastes and by degrees destroys the substance of the borrower. But I am inclined to believe, that usury in Scripture, generally, if not always signifies, all interest. In Nehemiah, it is evident that by usury is meant all increase, or interest; for they were required to restore all the gain they had received, viz. the hundredth part of the principal per month. And they said, "We will restore them, and will require nothing of them." The same appears also from the passages quoted from Leviticus and from Ezekiel, where increase is added to usury. Increase, where both terms are used together, seems to refer to provisions, and usury to money; as appears from the passage in Leviticus. "Take thou no usury of him or increase." The different meaning of the two terms we

learn from what immediately follows. "Thou shalt not give him thy money upon usury, nor lend him thy victuals for increase." Hence we may conclude that by the usury which is forbidden is meant all gain from money lent, as by the increase forbidden is clearly meant all gain from provisions lent.

But notwithstanding this, it does not appear that all interest is morally wrong. On the passage in Exodus, "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer;" we may observe, that this prohibited the Jews only from taking interest of their own people, and this too, only of those who were poor. And this prohibition seems to imply an allowance to take it of others. There is the same restriction of the prohibition in Leviticus; "If thy brother be waxen poor —yea though he be a stranger or a sojourner—Take thou no usury of him, or increase." And here the poor stranger and sojourner is mentioned, as to be treated in the same way. The prohibition in Deuteronomy is restricted to a brother. And it is added, "Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury." Hence it is evident there is nothing morally wrong in interest simply considered; for if there were, it would be wrong to take it of strangers. It appears that the Jews might take interest of other nations, but they must not oppress them, neither might they take any interest of those of them that were poor. With respect to their own nation, all interest was prohibited, at least with respect to those of them who were poor. The prohibition to take interest of their own nation generally, if it did extend to the whole nation, which is however doubtful, was, we have reason to believe, a political regulation, suited to their particular state. For they were a people not engaged in commerce, neither were they allowed to alienate inheritances. As to the other passages which prohibit usury, we ought to explain them in consistency with those quoted from the Mosaic law. And hence we learn that interest is not in Scripture, as a general rule prohibited; but on the contrary is allowed under certain restrictions. This further appears, from what our Saviour said in the parable of the talents, in which he mentioned the custom of receiving interest to illustrate the duty of the slothful servant. It is not probable, that he would have thus alluded to this custom if the practice

had been in itself unlawful; and indeed the force of the comparison is derived from this, that an estate ought to be used to advantage.

Besides in a commercial country, borrowing money appears to be necessary to trade; but there is such a risk in lending, that very few who have money would be willing to lend without the prospect of gain. And further the loan is often a benefit to the borrower. And it does appear clearly to be an equitable principle, that if I am to lie out of the use of my property, and at the same time to run a risk of losing it, while the borrower is increasing his estate with it, I ought to have at least a part of the profits. From the aforementioned considerations, I would draw the conclusion that interest, kept within due bounds, and with the exception of certain cases, which shall in their proper place be mentioned, is morally right.

We shall now inquire, what degree of interest is wrong? Sometimes it is wrong to take any interest. For the Jews were forbidden to take any interest of the poor for the necessaries of life; but if they were able, it was their duty to lend them without the expectation of a reward. The law of charity teaches christians the same. Yea, it may be our duty sometimes to lend, without expecting to receive the principal again. This is clearly taught by our Saviour, Luk. vi. 35. "Love ye your enemies, and do good, and *lend*, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest." We are not to suppose that this rule was intended to have a universal application; for then it would contradict other express passages of Scripture; and also be in opposition to the plain principles of equity already mentioned. The meaning must be, that when a man is in necessity, and asks to borrow to meet the present necessity, and we are able to lend him, and can do it without interfering with other duties, it is our duty so to do, though it may appear doubtful whether he ever will be able to pay. The only difference between this kind of lending, and a gift is, that in the latter case, we expect no payment on any condition, but in the former we expect, that if the borrower ever become able, he will be honest and return the loan.

In those cases in which it is morally lawful to take interest, how much may be taken? Supposing no civil laws

regulating the rate of interest, we cannot fix any precise proportion, applicable to all cases. We must carefully avoid oppression. Whenever interest oppresses, and while it enriches the lender, impoverishes the borrower, without any fault of his, it becomes exorbitant and oppressive, and is highly criminal in the sight of God. Money loaned ought always to be on such interest, that with proper management, the borrower may live as well as the lender. It may sometimes be more and sometimes less inconvenient to lend money. The hazard is sometimes greater, and sometimes less, according as the security is more or less certain. These things may properly be taken into the account, and where civil laws do not forbid, interest for the use of money may be regulated accordingly. Hence if the civil laws did not fix the standard of interest, it might at some times be morally lawful to take more than at others, and from some persons than others, according to circumstances.

But owing to the corruption of the human heart, and the natural propensity of mankind to get gain, and increase their estates, such is the propensity to abuse the right to take interest, and to oppress in the exercise of this right ; and owing to the frequent temptations to borrow, and the deceiving nature of interest, such is the proneness of the borrower to submit to the exorbitant demands of the lender, to his great injury, if not his ruin in the end, that in most countries, the civil laws have wisely fixed a standard of interest. This being fixed, it becomes a moral duty, not to pass this bound. It may be morally wrong, from some persons, and under certain circumstances, to take as much as the law allows. This is always the case, when what is taken, must oppress and impoverish the borrower while it enriches the lender. But although it may be duty sometimes to take less than the law allows, it is sinful to take more, although if there were no law prohibiting, it might conscientiously be done. For both the good of society and the laws of God require, that human laws should be obeyed except where they interfere with the rights of conscience, and this too in their spirit as well as their letter. If one man in society has a right to judge of the law, where his self-interest is concerned, whether it be good and ought to be obeyed or not, another has as good a right. If the

usurer may say that the law which forbids taking interest beyond a certain rate, is not right, and therefore he will violate it, the robber has as good a right to judge that property ought to be common, and that therefore the law which forbids him to take it from his neighbour is wrong and ought not to be obeyed. And so with respect to every other character and any other law. Hence, the principle, that the laws which we do not like, may be dispensed with, because they stand opposed to our selfish interests, if carried to its legitimate consequences, would fill society with disorder and misery, and destroy civil government. And the example of the usurer, in breaking the laws of his country is peculiarly dangerous, because as he generally is a man of considerable property, and as property generally gives influence in society, his example is the more dangerous. Hence the good of society forbids the taking of interest prohibited by law; and the man who does it, deserves not the character of a good citizen.

But further, the laws of God require obedience to the civil laws. The usurer therefore, apart from the oppression and extortion, which may be connected with the practice, and apart from the evil consequences to society of the principle on which he acts, breaks the law of God, by disregarding and transgressing the laws of his country. This is evident from the following texts, Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5; "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." And 1 Pet. ii. 13; "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." Will the usurer evade the force of these remarks and these texts, by cloaking himself under an observance of the letter of the law, while he violates its spirit and does actually receive more than lawful interest? Notwithstanding he may evade human penalties, yet the voice of mankind makes him as guilty as though he broke the letter of the law. He is a usurer in public estimation, and he is so also in the sight of God, the penalty of whose laws, he cannot evade.

From what has been said it appears, that though it be

morally lawful to take interest, it is wrong to take it of the poor: it is also wrong to ask or take such a rate of any person, as must be oppression to him, and in the end, while the lender is enriched, the borrower must be impoverished and distressed. The whole tenor of Scripture, which forbids all oppression and extortion, under heavy penalties, is against such a rate of interest. And further it is wrong for us, among whom there is a standard of interest fixed by law, ever, either directly or indirectly, to exceed this standard, whether the rate demanded oppress or not.

The odiousness and evil of usury, or exorbitant, or unlawful interest, appear, in addition to what has already been said, from other considerations. The etymology of the word in different languages teaches its odious and evil nature. The general word in the Hebrew as has already been observed signifies that which bites as a serpent. In the same language, another word is sometimes used which signifies a burden. In the Chaldaic language, the word used signifies corruption, and destruction, because usury wastes and destroys men. The practice has always been odious in popular estimation. Almost all civilized societies have enacted laws against it. And in the word of God, besides those threatnings which are made against oppression generally, which includes exorbitant interest, we find written, the good man, "putteth not out his money to usury;" Ps. xv. 5. And, "he that by usury and unjust gain increaseth his substance, he shall gather it for him that will pity the poor;" Prov. xxviii. 8. These texts, if they do not mean all interest, must undoubtedly at least signify that which is exorbitant. Again Jeremiah, when he expressed his wonder that the world should strive and contend with him, gave as the reason why he wondered, that he was no usurer; Jer. xv. 10. As though this more than any thing else, if he had been guilty of it, would have justified the conduct of the world towards him. In the 18th Chapter of Ezekiel, we find usury mentioned among the most flagitious crimes, as a trait in the character of the wicked man. And from our text we learn, that it was one of those grievous sins, for which God destroyed Jerusalem, desolated Judea, and sent the inhabitants into captivity.

Let the usurer seriously consider these things; study to know what is right, without suffering his judgment to be

biassed by self interest; and knowing his duty, let him as he regards the favour of God, cease to violate his law, repent of his former transgressions, and set himself to act agreeably to the will of God. And let us all guard against such a love of gain, as may lead us to act contrary to either the letter or spirit of the divine law.—AMEN.

SERMON LXXXV.

NINTH COMMANDMENT—LYING.

EXODUS XX. 16.

"*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.*"

The object of this commandment is, our own and our neighbour's *character*. The duties required, and the sins forbidden, in this commandment, are stated in our Catechism in the answers to the 77th and 78th questions, as follows, viz.

"*What is required in the ninth commandment?*

The ninth commandment requireth the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbour's good name; especially in witness bearing.

What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

The ninth commandment forbiddeth, whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbour's good name.

The great duties required in this commandment are truth, and a regard to reputation. The great sins forbidden are lying, and slander. These duties and sins may be subdivided into several particulars.

With respect to *truth*, this commandment requires us always to speak it, whether in giving testimony before a court of justice, in common conversation, or in the promises we make; and also to defend and promote the truth in others. With respect to *lying* the opposite of truth, this commandment forbids all falsehood, whether in giving ev-

idence, in common conversation, or in making promises. It also forbids concealing the truth, in giving evidence, when we are bound to declare the whole truth; or concealing it though not called upon to declare it, when by such concealment, our neighbour may be injured. And it further forbids, knowingly appearing in favour of an unjust cause, and pleading against the truth, passing unjust sentences contrary to the known truth, forgery, hypocrisy, and all equivocation and mental reservation.

With respect to *reputation*, this commandment requires in regard to our own good name, that we be careful to conduct in such a manner, as to deserve it, and then that we in a suitable way defend it: and in regard to the good name of others, it requires, that we love, desire, and rejoice in their good; that we sorrow on account of their infirmities and cover them, unless their good and that of the public, manifestly require that they should be made known; that we defend their innocency when they are unjustly defamed; that we readily receive a good report, and slowly and cautiously admit an evil report concerning them: and that we discourage talebearers, and slanderers. With respect to reputation this commandment forbids, in regard to our own good name, all such conduct as may justly injure our character in the sight of the world; in regard to the good name of others, it forbids all slandering, backbiting, detracting, talebearing, unreasonable suspicions, misconstruing intentions, words and actions, unnecessary discovering of infirmities, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and rejoiceing in the disgrace and infamy of others.

Having given this brief and general view of this commandment, we shall in further attending to it, particularly treat of the two leading sins forbidden by it, viz. *lying* and *slander*; and in doing this we shall naturally attend to the contrary duties.

The object of this discourse is to treat of the sin of *lying*.

A *lie* may be defined to be a contradiction of our thoughts, by the signs we make use of to express them.—Agreeably to this definition, a person may be guilty of a lie, when at the same time, that which he utters, proves eventually to be true. For instance, should a person inform me that a friend would visit me at a certain time, when at

the same time, he had no reason to believe, and indeed did not believe that the event would take place—in such a case, should the event foretold take place, still the person who foretold it would be guilty of a lie, because his words contradicted the thoughts of his mind. And on the other hand a person may utter that which is not really true, provided he believes it to be true, and yet not be guilty of a lie. For in such a case, his thoughts and his words would agree, his words would be the index of his mind, and he would only be in a mistake or error. Hence when a person makes to another a promise of any thing, if at the time of promising he fully intends to perform, though he afterwards fail to fulfil his promise, he is not guilty of a lie, though he may be criminal in other respects. Again a person may be guilty of lying without using words, viz. by using such signs, or acting in such a manner, purposely to deceive, as does deceive another, and lead him to believe what is not true.

And here while illustrating the nature of lying, we may further remark, that figurative speeches, such as metaphors, allegories, irony, and the like, though not literally true, are not lies. We frequently find such figures used in Scripture. Thus Christ is called a stone, a rock, a vine, &c ; and the trees are represented as going forth to anoint a king over them, and addressing the olive, the fig, the vine, and the bramble. In these metaphors and allegories, the meaning is according to truth, and it is understood, and there is no disagreement between the mind of the speaker, and the sense he would convey. And frequently in this figurative way, instruction is conveyed more intelligibly and forcibly, than if the expression had been literal. In irony the gesture and manner of speaking evidently convey the meaning of the mind ; so that here again, there is no disagreement between the thoughts of the mind and the signs used to convey them, and therefore no lie. Of this manner of speaking we have several instances in the Scriptures.

Lies are usually divided into three kinds.

1. *Jocose*, or those which are told with a design to amuse company, without any intention to profit or hurt, either ourselves or others.

2. *Officious*, or those which are made with a design to excuse or to promote the good of ourselves or others.

3. *Pernicious* or *Malicious* made with a design to injure others.

With respect to lies of the last class, there can be no dispute as to their criminality. But some lax casuists have plead in favour of lies of the two former classes, and especially of the second, as innocent.

It is allowed, there are different degrees of guilt attached to the different species of lying; but every kind is sinful. The Scriptures every where condemn lying without excepting any particular kind. A lie is essentially wrong, and therefore cannot be made right without destroying its essence, or its ceasing to be a lie. A lawful lie is as palpable a contradiction, and as great an absurdity, as to say a lawful sin, or a sinless sin.

To the innocence of *jocose* lying in particular, we may object, that truth is too sacred, and too important to the well being of society, ever to be trifled with even in jest. Further a trifling with truth in jest, has a tendency to lessen a sense of its sacredness, and therefore to render it easier for persons to falsify the truth in a more important sense. And, again I believe, that a practice of violating the truth, even in jest, will lessen a person's character, in popular estimation, and if this opinion be correct the criminality of the practice is confirmed by common sense.

As to *officious* lies, or those which are made with a design to excuse or promote the good of ourselves or others we may argue their criminality from the words of the Apostle, Rom. iii. 8; "As we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say, let us do evil, that good may come; whose damnation is just." The principle on which officious lies are justified is that they are made for a good end, and that the end justifies the means. This is the very principle that the Apostle condemns in the passage just quoted. Some had reported that the Apostle himself preached this doctrine; but he repelled the charge, and called it a slander; and further declared their damnation to be just, who acted upon this principle.

Having thus explained the nature and pointed out the different kinds of lying, we proceed to prove the evil of this sin.

I. It is contrary to the moral character of God. What-

soever is contrary to God's moral character, as he is infinitely excellent, must have an intrinsic deformity. Now truth is an essential perfection of God. He is "a God of truth;" Deut. xxxii. 4. "Abundant in truth;" Ex. xxxiv. 6. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of a man, that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good;" Num. xxiii. 19. He is a "God that cannot lie;" Tit. i. 2. Such is the character of God as given to us in the Scriptures. Truth is an essential perfection of God; and a lie is directly the opposite. This teaches us the evil of lying, and its odiousness in the sight of God, who has an infinite love to his perfections, and by consequence an infinite hatred of what is opposed to them, and therefore has an infinite love to truth and an infinite hatred of a lie.

2. The wickedness of lying is proved by its contrariety to that pattern of excellence Christ Jesus, who is proposed to us in the gospel for our imitation, and whose temper and conduct, it is our duty to imitate as far as they are imitable. The Scriptures speak of him as "true;" Mat. xxii. 16. As "the faithful and true witness;" Rev. iii. 14. As "full of grace and and truth;" John i. 14. and as "the truth;" John xiv. 6.

3. A lie assimilates us to Satan, whose character is directly the reverse of every thing that is excellent. Christ spake of him, John viii. 44; as follows; "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it." From this text we learn, with whom lying originated, and after whom liars copy. The devil is the father of lies, after him liars copy, and to him are they by this practice assimilated.

4. Another argument to prove the wickedness of this practice, is, that the word of God expressly forbids lying, and requires truth its opposite; as in the following texts; "Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts;" Ps. li. 6. "Ye shall not lie one to another;" Lev. xix. 11. "These things doth the Lord hate, a lying tongue, a false witness that speaketh lies." Prov. vi. 16. 17, 19. "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight;" Prov. xii. 22. "Putting away lying, speak

every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another;" Eph. iv. 25. "Lie not one to another;" Col. iii. 9. These are some out of many texts in Scripture, which we find on this subject, and they plainly teach that it is our duty to speak the truth, and that lying is a great sin.

And here it may be important to notice some examples in Scripture of holy men appearing to violate this precept of the moral law. And this is the more necessary, because the examples of such are sometimes construed into a license to sin. But before these examples are adduced, it will be proper to remark that "there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not;" Eccl. vii. 20. The Scripture saints were, with all their excellencies, but imperfect men. And their failings are faithfully recorded, not for our imitation, but to show us the weakness of human nature, and as cautions to those who think they stand, to take heed lest they fall. Jacob's conduct in obtaining his father's blessing cannot be justified. It is by no means certain that he was at that time a renewed person; but if he was, his conduct in that affair was a blot upon his character as a pious man. He was guilty of a lie in declaring himself to be Esau. And God permitted him to receive the blessing, not as the reward, or in approbation of his deceit; for, for this he was severely chastised in the disasters which afterwards befell him; but in pursuance of his sovereign purpose, that the elder should serve the younger. The conduct of Rahab, in declaring concerning the spies, whom she had concealed, that they had gone out another way, cannot be justified. She also was guilty of a falsehood. And although the Apostle in the epistle to the Hebrews, speaks in commendation of her; yet it was not for her deception; but for her faith in the threatnings of God against her devoted city; and for her love and hospitality towards the people of God. We must form the same judgment, condemning the conduct of David in what he said to Ahimelech the priest at Nob; and also in his feigning himself mad before Achish king of Gath; and on another occasion telling him that he had been against the South of Judah, when he had been spoiling other nations.

But there are several instances in Scripture, wherein there may appear to have been a departure from truth in

good men, when indeed there was not. Elisha did not lie, when he told the Syrian soldiers, who were in search of him, "This is not the way, neither is this city; follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek;" 2 Kings vi. 19. For he had come out of the city, whither they were about entering, and if they had gone on in the way they were going, they would not have found him; and according to his promise, he did bring them to the man whom they sought; for after he had, to show them how easy it was for God to turn their counsels into foolishness, led them to Samaria, he discovered himself to them. It is true, he did not tell them the whole truth; but this he was not bound to do. Again, Micaiah the prophet, did not lie, when he told king Ahab, in answer to his question, "shall we go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? Go and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king;" 1 Kings xxii. 15. For he probably spake ironically and was thus understood by the king. Paul also may be vindicated from the charge of telling a lie, when in reply to the charge of reviling Ananias the high-priest, he said, "I wist not that he was the high-priest:" Acts. xxiii. 5. For we may suppose that he did not know that he was the high-priest. It was a confused assembly, and it is probable that neither the place in which the high-priest sat, nor his dress, at this time designated him; and Paul had become a stranger at Jerusalem; and the high-priest in these times of tumult was frequently changed. But if he did know him, he may have meant by the expression, that he did not acknowledge him as the Lord's high-priest.

With respect to such instances in Scripture as have already been cited, I would only further observe, that most of them can be vindicated from the charge of falsehood; and wherever this cannot be done, their conduct must be condemned, in these particulars, and is not to be considered as an example for our imitation. The Scriptures, while they contain the record of their conduct, in these instances, no where commend it; but on the contrary frequently prohibit and condemn all lying, and no where give the least license to the indulgence of this sin.

5. Another argument against lying may be drawn from this consideration, that it is a perversion of the faculty of speech. The power of speech was given to us by the

Creator to be a means of communicating to others the thoughts of our minds. When therefore we use this power for a contrary purpose, we pervert and abuse the gift of God, which is certainly an evil thing.

6. Lying is injurious to the interests of civil society. This the Apostle intimated, when he urged as a motive to speak the truth; "for we are members one of another;" Eph. iv. 25. Truth between man and man is the bond of social union—without this, men would place no confidence in one another; and a general departure from truth would occasion the greatest confusion, disorder and unhappiness in society. Therefore lying is a very great evil. Indeed it has been considered so pernicious to the interests of civil society, that among the ancient Romans, it is said to have been punished with death.

7. Another argument against lying may be drawn from a regard to our own character. Notwithstanding the depravity of mankind, this vice has been, and still is, in a peculiar manner, branded with infamy by popular opinion. Even they, who are themselves addicted to lying, are anxious to have others speak the truth, and will esteem a liar less than a man of approved veracity. Yea, lying is so base a vice in popular estimation, that liars themselves cannot bear to be called by the name. A greater affront can scarcely be given to a person than to call him a liar; nor will any affront be sooner resented. Now, if the name be so odious, the thing itself must be far more so. Solomon said "The lip of truth shall be established forever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment;" Prov. xii. 19. The truth of this saying our own observation has doubtless confirmed. Whatever advantage a person may gain by falsehood, if he is detected as is generally the case, his advantage will be but momentary: he purchases it at the expense of his reputation, which he will not easily redeem. For being once detected in a falsehood, he will be viewed with suspicion, and will scarcely gain belief when he speaks the truth.

8. Once more, the evil nature of this sin is proved by this consideration, unless it is repented of and forsaken, it will bring down the wrath of God upon the person guilty of it, and issue in his everlasting destruction. Thus we read, "thou (that is the Lord) shalt destroy them that speak leasing;" that is falsehood; Ps. v. 6. "For curs-

ing and lying which they speak, consume them in wrath;" Ps. lix. 12, 13. "He that speaketh lies shall not escape—he that speaketh lies shall perish;" Prov. xix. 5, 9. "There shall in no wise enter into it (that is the heavenly Jerusalem) any thing that maketh a lie;" Rev. xxi. 27. "Without are, whosoever loveth and maketh a lie;" Rev. xxii. 15. "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death;" Rev. xxi. 8. Such are the threatenings of the God of truth against those who practice the sin of lying; and such is the doom of liars. God will destroy them; he will consume them in wrath; they shall not escape; they shall perish; they shall be shut out of heaven; and they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.

How odious and how dangerous is this sin! It is contrary to the character of God, and the example of Christ. It likens a person to Satan. It is a violation of God's law repeatedly expressed. It is a perversion of the faculty of speech. It is injurious to the interests of civil society. It is ruinous to character, and exposes to the contempt of men in this world. And it will unless repented of and forsaken, assuredly draw down the vengeance of God on the person guilty of it, and issue in his everlasting destruction in the future world. "Such a horrid monster (says one*) is this vice in all its shapes, that it needs only to be seen, that it may be hated—only to be discovered that it may be detested. What a detestable wretch then is a liar! suspected by all, despised by the good, the contempt of the bad, a coward through life, a monster in death, and a miserable outcast in eternity."

Are there any present addicted to this sin? Let them reflect on these things, and be filled with an abhorrence of this vice, repent of it, and forsake it. This sin as well as others will be forgiven on true repentance.

And let what has been said, influence us all, ever, sacredly to adhere to the truth in all our intercourse with the world. Let us carefully guard against the causes which may lead to this sin; such as pride and vanity, which may tempt to magnify relations concerning ourselves, covetousness which may excite to falsehood for

*See *Churchman's Mag. vol.* 2. *pag.* 280.

the sake of gain, distrust of the Lord which doubtless often leads to lying to avoid some threatening calamity, the fear of man which bringeth a snare, and those crimes which are esteemed peculiarly disgraceful among men, and which tempt the perpetrators to falsehood to prevent their discovery. And let us always remember, when tempted to swerve from the truth, that God seeth us, and knoweth our hearts—that although we may deceive men, we cannot deceive him; and that by lying, to prevent discovery from men, we run into a far greater evil, by subjecting ourselves to the wrath of God.

May the Lord write his law upon our hearts; and especially may he fill us with an abhorrence of lying, and a love of truth; and by his grace help us ever to adhere to the truth—AMEN.

SERMON LXXXVI.

EVIL SPEAKING.

JAMES IV. 11. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*"

At the time when James wrote this epistle, the sins of the tongue appear to have been very prevalent. Hence, in his epistle, he several times spake of the sins committed by the tongue, and pointed out their evils, and warned against them. The sins committed by the tongue are numerous. Blasphemy, perjury, profane swearing, cursing, lying, and many others belong to this class; as also does speaking evil of our neighbour. It was against the last mentioned sin of the tongue that James exhorted in our text. "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."

This exhortation is addressed to us, and we have need of it, as well as those to whom the Apostle wrote. Evil speaking is a sin, to which mankind have always had a propensity; and perhaps few sins have done, or do, much

more mischief in society than this. Persons indulge themselves in this vice from different causes. In some it arises from a barrenness of mind; their knowledge scarcely extends beyond the scandals of the day, and they would have nothing to say in company, if they were not to talk of what they have seen and heard about their neighbours. In some it arises from a fondness of telling news, connected with a lively fancy, and a love of the marvellous, which prompts them to embellish their tale by making some additions, to what they really heard or saw. And in some it arises from an envious, censorious, or malicious disposition, which delights in injuring others. All who indulge in evil speaking from any of these causes, are ciminal, though they are the most criminal who are influenced by the last mentioned cause.

Evil speaking belongs to the sins forbidden by the ninth commandment. Under evil speaking are included a number of particulars, such as detraction, slander or calumny, back-biting, and tale-bearing or tattling. Detraction signifies the telling such things of another as may take from his reputation, or lessen his character. Slander or calumny signifies charging a person falsely with something disgraceful, whether it be done in his presence or absence. Back-biting is a speaking to the injury of our neighbour behind his back, or when he is absent. And tale-bearing or tattling is a carrying those things we see and hear in one house or company to another, or a telling others what we have heard their neighbours say of them.

Speaking evil of others, when what we say, we know to be false or in any degree false, being exaggerated beyond the truth, as is almost always the case with the true stories which go from hand to hand, is wrong. Such evil speaking is not only detraction but lying, and therefore is a complicated wickedness. Again it is wrong to speak to the injury of others, when we believe what we say is true, unless the fact be clearly ascertained. A man's character is very dear and of great importance to him, and we ought never to say any thing to the injury of his character, unless we are sure of its truth; for it may be false, and then we would be the instruments of blasting the reputation of the innocent. Have we heard it from others? they may be prejudiced, or they may be under-

a mistake, or they may have intended to slander, or they may be too credulous, and may have taken up the report without sufficiently investigating whether it was founded in truth. Have we taken up the story from common fame, and do we relate it on this authority? It is certain that common fame is a very great liar. We have often known stories which have been industriously circulated, and firmly believed, prove to be unfounded, when they have been investigated. The history of judicial proceedings, furnish numerous instances in confirmation of the truth of this remark. And it has often been proved that accusations which tended to blast a man's character, were false, when evidence was exceedingly strong against him. For instance, evidence was exceedingly strong against Joseph, when he was accused by his mistress to Potiphar; for she had his garment in her possession as a proof of his guilt. Such instances teach us that we ought to proceed with extreme caution, in taking up, and circulating an evil report to the injury of our neighbour.—Again, when we are convinced, that a person has been guilty of doing that which is wrong; when we have been eye or ear witness of his wickedness, or have such a clear evidence of it as leaves no room to doubt, still it is wrong to divulge what we know, except under certain circumstances. To tell it through malace or envy, with a design to injure our neighbour; or to divulge it merely to gratify a propensity to tattle and tell news, is wrong. But if, while we pity our neighbour, and are sorry for his conduct, we divulge his failings for his good, or for the public good, or for our own defence or the defence of the innocent, our conduct is correct. It may sometimes be necessary for the reformation of the offender that his crimes be divulged; but in this case we ought first to use private means, to lead him to repentance and reformation, and not to expose him in public, until private means have failed. Sometimes the public good may require that a man's crimes should be divulged, that he may be brought to justice, that the public may be put on their guard against him, and that he may be prevented from doing more mischief. And sometimes the innocent, and even we ourselves may be charged with crimes which we know have been committed by another person—in such a case it is correct, and our duty to discover the guilty, that the in-

nocent may be cleared. But except in these cases, where the reformation of the offender, or the public good, or the clearing of the innocent require it, it is wrong to report even the truth to the hurt of our neighbour; and much more is it wrong, readily to take up an evil report of our neighbour, and spread it without any certainty whether it be true or false; and still worse is it to invent slanderous tales concerning others, and propagate them to the injury of their good name.

But alas! there are many in our world who act thus.—There are many, who invent falsehoods respecting others, and with a malignant pleasure tell them to gratify a malicious, revengeful, or envious disposition. There are many who ascribe their neighbour's conduct to bad motives, and undertake to judge and condemn them. There are many who unwillingly receive a good report concerning their neighbour; but who eagerly receive, and readily believe, and with satisfaction spread, an evil report. There are many who say behind a neighbour's back what they would not dare to say to his face; and often too, preface what they say with making some observations in his praise, and then expressing their sorrow that he has acted thus, and thus, in a particular instance; when their preface and their feigned sorrow are only intended to render their slander the more palatable, and inflict the deeper wound on his reputation. There are many who thus stab their neigbour in secret, and he knows not whence the blow comes, or how to meet it and defend his injured character. The midnight assassin is but a shade more guilty than such an one; for he that murders my reputation, might almost as well take my life. And there are many who go from house to house and from company to company, and carry with large additions what they have heard dropped in an unguarded moment, without any intention of injuring another. If it were possible, our doors ought to be shut against such tattlers, and talebearers; and they ought to be excluded the social circle, that they may not disturb the peace of society.

The wickedness of evil speaking may be proved from several considerations.

1. It is directly opposed to that charity or love towards our neighbour, which is frequently enjoined in Scripture. We are commanded, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

thyself;" Mat. xix. 19. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them;" Mat. vii. 12. Evil speaking is doubtless opposed to these precepts. Slanderers and back-biters, certainly, would not be willing that the same liberty should be taken with their characters, as they take with those of others. And it would be a good rule, under which always to act, when prompted to talk to the injury of our neighbours, not to say any thing, but what we would be willing they should say of us with equal foundation. If this rule were universally adhered to, there would be but very little evil speaking in our world, and but few of those many evils which now arise in society from talking about others. Again, we are taught in the Scriptures that "love worketh no ill to his neighbour." Rom. xiii. 10. And that, that charity without which we are nothing, "suffereth long, and is kind, envieth not, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, believeth all things, hopeth all things;" 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 6, 7. Of this charity or love to our neighbour, evil speaking is a breach. Further, we are exhorted—"Put on therefore (as the elect of God holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, forbearing one another. And above all things, put on charity which is the bond of perfectness;" Col. iii. 12, 13, 14. "And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted forgiving one another; Eph. iv. 32. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." Eph. v. 2. Most assuredly evil speaking is directly the opposite of the duties enjoined in these texts, and therefore must be wrong.

2. Evil speaking is forbidden not only by consequence drawn from required duties, but also expressly, and this too repeatedly, as in the following texts. In the law of Moses we read, "thou shalt not raise a false report; Ex. xxiii. 1. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people;" Lev. xix. 16.

The Psalmist describing a good man, said, "He that back-biteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." Ps. xv. 3. In another place he gave the following as a trait in the character of the wicked man, "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother: thou slanderest thine own mother's son;" Ps. L. 20. Again, speaking in his character of civil ruler, he said, "Whoso privily slander-

eth his neighbour, him will I cut off;" Ps. ci. 5. And in another place he said, "let not an evil speaker be established in the earth;" Ps. cxl. 11. Solomon said, "a wicked man walketh with a froward mouth. Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually, he soweth discord. These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him." One of them is, "him that soweth discord among brethren;" Prov. vi. 12. 14, 16, 19. "He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool;" Prov. x. 18. "A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends;" Prov. xvi. 28. Paul in that dreadful catalogue of the sins of the gentiles, whom God had given over to a reprobate mind, contained, Rom. i. 29, &c. included "whisperers, and back-biters." He exhorted the Ephesians, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you;" Eph. iv. 31. And he exhorted Titus to remind his hearers, "To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers;" Tit. iii. 2. And Peter exhorted, "laying aside all evil speakings;" 1 Pet. ii. 1.

These texts show that the sin of which we are treating is repeatedly forbidden in the word of God.

3. Another reason against evil speaking is, that it is assuming the prerogative of judging and condemning which does not belong to us; and this too contrary to all justice, without hearing the accused party. Evil speakers, oftentimes and generally decide that a man has done wrong without waiting to hear his defence; and having thus partially judged that he has done wrong, they proceed to pronounce him a bad man, and to condemn him to a loss of reputation, and to execute the sentence, by proclaiming to the world as true, the opinion they have formed of his character. This is contrary to the universally acknowledged principles of justice. A man may deserve to have property taken from him; but no individual has a right to take it away; he cannot be deprived of it, until the cause has been tried in a court of justice, and after having had an opportunity to defend himself, has had a decision given against him. And cannot a man's property be justly wrested from him by individuals, nor by the public, without an opportunity of defending himself? And can individuals have a right to take a man's character

from him, as slanderers and back-biters do, without giving him an opportunity, first, to defend himself? It cannot be that they can justly do this. For character is of as much and more importance than property.

This rash and private judging and condemning, of which evil speakers are guilty, is frequently condemned in the Scriptures. Thus immediately following our text, we read, "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another." To the same purpose our Saviour spake, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" Mat. vii. 1, 2, 3. And Paul said, "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest, dost the same things;" Rom. ii. 1. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth;" Rom. xiv. 4. "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts;" 1 Cor. iv. 5. These texts evidently teach, that we ought to be, at least very cautious about ascribing the actions of men to bad motives, and forming a bad opinion of their conduct; and that we ought to avoid all rash and precipitate judgment, and much more expressing such a judgment to the disadvantage of others. Hence, in these verses; evil speaking is evidently condemned; and it is intimated that those who speak evil of others, are oftentimes guilty themselves of those very things, which they so severely censure in others, and we have reason to believe that generally, they who are most forward to scandalize their neighbours, are most guilty themselves. They behold the mote in their brother's eye, but consider not the beam that is in their own eye. "Thou hypocrite (said our Saviour to such) first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out

the mote out of thy brother's eye ;" Mat. vii. 5. If, my hearers, we were to look more at ourselves, we would probably see less reason to be dwelling on our neighbour's faults.

4. Another reason against speaking evil of others, is the evil consequences which result from this practice. It is the cause of a flood of evils in society. James, speaking of the abuses of the tongue, said, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire of hell. The tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." Jam. iii. 5, 6, 8. In this passage, the tongue which is the instrument in slandering, back-biting, and tale-bearing is called a fire ; and from the same passage we learn, whence this fire is kindled—it is set on fire of hell. Evil speaking has its origin from hell, and is the fruit of the temper of hell residing in the heart. And in this same passage are pointed out the great evils produced by this vice. It is a little fire which kindleth a great matter ; it setteth on fire the course of nature ; and it is a deadly poison. Evil speaking has injured and destroyed many characters ; and this too of the innocent. It has sown discord in families, neighbourhoods, and societies. The most tragical events have sometimes resulted from it ; and it has been and still is one of the most fruitful sources of the jarrings and contentions in the world. And is this the case, and must not the conduct which produces so much mischief be very wicked ?"

5. Another argument against this vice may be drawn from the common sense of mankind. Notwithstanding they are so prone to listen to, and practice evil speaking, yet the detractor, the slanderer, the back-biter and the tale bearer, are odious characters in common estimation. And even they who are addicted to these vices, are very unwilling to bear the names.

6. I mention one other argument against this vice, and that is, it is a soul destroying sin. A good man may sometimes, through inattention, or in the hurry of conversation transgress in this respect, as well as in others; but they who habitually indulge themselves in this iniquity, whatever their profession may be, certainly cannot be

the people of God, but must be children of wrath. This is clearly evident from some of those texts which have already been quoted. We are expressly told without charity or love, we are "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal," and "nothing;" 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. But he who habitually indulges himself in this vice, must be destitute of this charity; for this charity "is kind, envieth not, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, believeth all things, hopeth all things;" 1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c. The habitually evil speaker, certainly cannot have this charity; and therefore, whatever be his professions and hopes, he is nothing.— The Psalmist describing the good man who shall dwell in the holy hill of God, or heaven, gave the following as a trait in his character, "he back-biteth not with his tongue nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour;" Ps. xv. 3. From this text it appears that the back-biter cannot dwell in the holy hill of God, and therefore must be in a graceless state. Again, the wise man gave as a trait in the character of the wicked man, "he soweth discord;" Prov. vi. 14. And he called him "that uttereth a slander a fool;" Prov. x. 18. By which he meant a wicked man. And James wrote, "if any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain." Jam. i. 26. In these texts the evil speaker may see his character and situation. He is a wicked man; and he is yet under the wrath of God, and in danger of everlasting misery, which will certainly be his portion unless he repents of, and forsakes the habitual indulgence of this sin as well as every other.

Are there any present, addicted to this vice. Are there present any detractors, slanderers, or back-biters, who indulge themselves in speaking evil of their neighbours? Who invent slanders and report them? Whose ears are open to the tongue of calumny, and who readily take up an ill report against their neighbours, and spread it to their hurt? Are there present any tale-bearers, who go from house to house, to carry from one to the other what they hear and see; and who tell to those with whom they are, what they have heard others say about them, and perhaps gloss over what they have to say with a pretence of friendship? Are there any such characters present?

Let them seriously consider the arguments, which have been offered against this practice. God repeatedly forbids it in his word, and requires the opposite temper and conduct. It is contrary to the principles of justice, and is assuming a prerogative which does not belong to you. It is most pernicious in its consequences, blasting a man's character, sowing discord in society, and setting on fire the course of nature. It is odious in popular estimation. And the practice unless repented of and forsaken will assuredly destroy your souls forever. These are weighty considerations. Let them have their due weight upon your minds, and lead you to be ashamed of your past conduct, repent of it and forsake it.

Brethren, I want language to pourtray this vice in its truly odious colours. Permit me to adopt the language of another, the elegant Hunter in his conclusion of the history of Cain. "Hold thy bloody hand, son, daughter of murderous Cain! Why should a brother, a sister fall by it! That furious look is a dagger; that unkind word has made the blood, the hearts blood to follow it. Daughter of murderous Cain! A female hand armed with a sword, lifted up to slay, dipped in blood! No, she wields a more deadly weapon, she brandishes an envenomed tongue: poison more fatal than that of asps is under her lips; it is not the body that suffers, when that unruly member moves; it is the spirit, it is the spirit that bleeds: the man dies, and sees not who it was that hurt him; he perishes in the best part of himself, his good name is blasted; and what has he left worth possessing? The sight of a little *material* blood makes her faint: a dead corpse terrifies and shocks her; but she can calmly and with delight sit down to that horrid human sacrifice, a murdered, mangled reputation."

Brethren, what a shocking picture is this! Where is the original? Is it to be found among men? Yes. In civilized society? Yes. Yea among those who would be classed with refined society, as well as among the more vulgar. And what may well be still more astonishing, it is not confined to the more robust and less tender sex, but is found among that sex where we naturally look for more tenderness. My hearers, be shocked at the picture and shun this detestable and hurtful vice of speaking evil of others. May we all be enabled to put away and avoid

all evil speaking, to put on charity which is the bond of perfectness, to be kind and tender-hearted one to another, and to walk in that brotherly love which worketh no ill to our neighbour.—AMEN.

SERMON LXXXVII.

TENTH COMMANDMENT.

EXODUS XX. 17.

"*Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.*"

The object of this commandment appears to be, to regulate, and set bounds to our desires; and especially to restrain us from improper feelings towards others, or desires of those things which belong to them. Or, in other words, this commandment requires a suitable frame of mind in regard to the Providence of God, with respect to both ourselves and others, and prohibits the contrary.—This explication is agreeable to the sense in which the authors of our excellent Catechism understood this commandment.

According to them,

"*The tenth commandment requireth full contentment, with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour and all that is his.*"

"*The tenth commandment forbiddeth all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbour, and all inordinate motions or affections to any thing that is his.*"

According to this explanation, the duties required in this commandment are, with respect to ourselves, contentment with our condition; and with respect to others, a right and charitable frame of spirit towards them and

theirs; and the sins forbidden are, with respect to ourselves discontentment; and with respect to others envy, and all inordinate motions or affections to any thing that is theirs.

I. Let us attend to the *duties* required in this commandment. And,

1. With respect to ourselves, this commandment requires *contentment* with our own condition.

By contentment is meant an acquiescence in the allotments of Providence with respect to ourselves, and a composed and satisfied frame of mind in the condition in which we may be placed. This contentment is a duty, whether we have little or much; and whether we are in adversity or prosperity. If facts did not prove the contrary, we should readily suppose, that it would be very easy to be contented in prosperity, when we abound in the good things of this life. But it is a fact, that frequently, as little contentment is found, among the rich and prosperous, as among the poor and distressed. Yea, we often see more contentment in the cottage than in the palace. And, not unfrequently, we find, that craving desires after more of the things of this world, and discontentment with present condition, increase in proportion as substance increases. Hence, they who are prosperous in the world have much need to be exhorted to contentment with their condition. With respect to the poor and afflicted, it is their duty also, notwithstanding their situation, to be contented; or, to acquiesce in the disposal of divine Providence, be resigned to his will, and patiently suffer those things which he lays upon them. But while contentment is our duty in every situation, it is proper to be joyful in prosperity, and to sorrow in adversity. Revealed religion does not require men to be Stoics, or to be insensible to pleasure and pain, and make no difference between the smiles and frowns of divine Providence, It is consistent also with contentment with our condition to desire to have prosperity and to avoid adversity, and to pray to enjoy the former, and to be delivered from the latter; but always with submission to the divine will. Thus, our Saviour was not insensible to his sufferings in the garden; but his soul was exceeding sorrowful even unto death;" Mat. xxvi. 38. And he desired to be delivered from his sufferings, "and prayed O my Fa-

ther, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But still he was contented, or resigned and submissive to the will of God. "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt,' was his language—Mat. xxvi. 39. Again it is consistent with contentment, to use means to obtain prosperity in the world, and to avoid or to be delivered out of adversity; but still with a spirit of submission to the will of God, if he sees fit not to crown these means with success.

The duty of contentment with our condition is clearly enjoined in the Scriptures, as in the following texts.—"Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content;" 1 Tim. vi. 8. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have;" Heb. xiii. 5. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need;" Phil. iv. 11, 12.

There are many motives to contentment with our condition, even when we are poor and afflicted. Our condition in this world, whatever it may be, is far better than we deserve. Eternal misery is our just desert, and whatever is short of this is better than we deserve. Besides there are scarcely any so afflicted, but they have many mercies left, the least of which is greater than they deserve; and this should make them contented with the allotments of Providence. Further we have the command of God and the examples of Christ and the saints to influence us to resignation. And afflictions have often proved blessings, to those exercised with them, and may and will prove so to us, if we improve them aright. And if we be God's people, he has placed us in that situation, which in his unerring wisdom, and unchanging love, he sees best for us. And he has told us in his word, "that all things work together for good to them that love God;" Rom. viii. 28. And soon will these trials be at an end—and "there remaineth a rest to the people of God;" Heb. iv. 9. Yea, we are told, "Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" 2 Cor. iv. 17. Such are the motives which urge to contentment, with our condition. though we be in an afflicted state. And besides all these we may observe, that contentment is its own reward. A

contented mind is calm and at rest, while the discontented are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest. Happiness which is so much desired by all, and after which all are aiming, does not depend so much on external circumstances, as on the state of the mind. If we are contented in our minds we shall be happy in any condition; but if we are discontented we must be unhappy in the most prosperous external circumstances. The

2nd duty required in this commandment is "*a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbour and all that is his.*" This consists in desiring the prosperity of others; and being pleased with and delighting in their prosperity, though they are more wise, rich, esteemed, and prosperous, than we; and grieving for them when they are brought into adversity. Agreeably to this, we are directed, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" Mat. xix. 19. "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep;" Rom. xii. 15. "Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body;" Heb. xiii. 3. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" Phil. ii. 4. "Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth;" 1. Cor. x. 24. "By love serve one another;" Gal. v. 13. "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ;" Gal. vi. 2.

These texts abundantly teach us, that we ought to seek our neighbour's good as well as our own, take an interest in his welfare, rejoice in his prosperity, and sympathize with him in his adversity. We proceed,

II. To consider the *sins* forbidden in the tenth commandment. These are discontentment, envy, and all inordinate motions or affections to any thing that is our neighbours.

1. *Discontentment* with our own estate or condition. This is what is forbidden in this commandment with respect to ourselves. The discontented person is not satisfied, but displeased with his present situation. He is impatient and unsubmissive under afflictions. He often magnifies imaginary into real, and light into heavy afflictions. He is uneasy and fretful, and he murmurs and repines at the providences of God. This frame of mind is very displeasing to God. Discontentment with our con-

dition is wicked. It is contrary to the will of God, clearly made known in his word. It is opposed to the example of patience and resignation which our divine Redeemer has set us, that we should walk in his steps. It argues great unthankfulness for the mercies we have received, and which we at present enjoy, the least of which is more than we deserve. And especially is there great ingratitude in the discontentment of those, who are in a comfortable and prosperous condition in the world. Further, discontentment with our condition, is a prizing this world too highly, and exalting it in our estimation above the favour of God, which is very wicked. It also argues great pride of heart, as though we felt we deserved a better portion in this world from the hands of Providence.—And it is also, an impeachment of divine Providence, and a distrust in God, as though he did not order things aright and we could order them better, and it was not safe to trust ourselves in his hands. From all these considerations, we learn that discontentment is a complicated wickedness. But it is difficult to convince men of this. Like Jonah in Nineveh, when his gourd withered, and the Lord reproved him for his discontentment, by asking him, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" And he replied in a petulant manner, "I do well to be angry even unto death;" Jon. iv. 9. So the discontented are apt to justify themselves for indulging such a frame of spirit. When they are reproved for their discontentment, some plead their natural temper and excuse themselves on this ground; but this temper is wrong and offensive to God, and therefore cannot form a just excuse for those sins which flow from it. Some plead the greatness of their affliction as a justification of their discontentment; but such a plea ought to be forever silenced, by the consideration that our heaviest afflictions are far less than we deserve. Some again plead that their affliction was unexpected, and therefore they were unprepared to bear it. But to this it may be answered, that as we live in a world of trial, we ought to be always prepared to meet afflictions. And it is no new thing that trials should come suddenly. Some of the best of men have been visited with sudden and unexpected trials, and yet have been patient and resigned under them. For instance, Job beheld himself in one day, precipitated from great prosperity, into poverty, and

loathsome and painful disease, and bereft of ten chileren, —all he had ; but still he said, "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord ;" Job i. 21. Discontentment is wrong in every situation, and it is its own punishment. A discontented state of mind renders a person very unhappy, while the contrary grace of contentment greatly alleviates afflictions. Besides discontentment cannot alter things, or render them better, but makes them worse, both by unfitting a person to take the proper means to better his condition, and by provoking the displeasure of God ; whereas contentment renders the mind calm and collected, and is the best way to secure the blessing of God on our endeavours to improve our condition.

2. Another sin forbidden by this commandment is *envy*. This has others for its object. By envy is meant an uneasiness or grieving at the prosperity of others, accompanied with ill will towards them. The object which excites it is superiority in others, whether this superiority consists in riches, in success in business, in honour, in popularity, in wisdom, in beauty, or in any thing else.— This is one of the most hateful passions that can be harboured in the human breast. To exercise, or harbour ill will towards one who has done us no injury, only because a sovereign God has made him in any respect superior to us, or because he has been more prosperous in the world than we, and this too perhaps, the result of his own prudence and diligence. What passion can be more odious, and more deserving of universal detestation ? And it is detested by mankind, and in others even by those who harbour it in their own bosoms. But still many indulge this hateful passion, though they are unwilling to acknowledge it, and may endeavour to conceal it. Envy has done a vast deal of mischief in our world. It was envy in Cain, because his brother was more righteous than he, that led him to hate and finally to kill him. It was envy that led the sons of Jacob, because Joseph was deservedly the beloved of his Father, and because his dreams predicted his future greatness, to hate him, to plot his ruin, to cast him into a pit, and to sell him into Egypt. It was through envy, as one cause, that the Pharisees and chief of the Jews, conspired against Christ, and finally put him to death. Both sacred and profane history a-

bound with instances which show the diabolical nature of envy, and the dreadful mischiefs to which it leads. It has led to slander and detraction. It has blasted the fair reputation of the innocent. It has led to take satisfaction in the downfall and misery of others. It has led to desire the death of others, and to rejoice in it. Yea, it has led to the most infernal plots, to take away the life of its object, and has often issued in murder. And in addition to all this, it will finally issue in the everlasting destruction of those who cherish it, unless repented of and forsaken. This dreadful consequence of envy is evident from the word of God. In that catalogue of sins, which the apostle Paul Rom. chap. i. charged upon the gentile world and for which God had given them over to a reprobate mind he included "envy." Again in that catalogue of sins, Gal. chap. v. concerning which he told the Galatians, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, he included "envyings. To the Corinthians he wrote, "whereas there is among you envying, are ye not carnal?" 1 Cor. iii. 3. And in the same epistle, describing that charity, without which we are nothing, he said it "envieth not;" 1 Cor. xiii. 4. And James hath told us, "If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work;" Jam. iii. 14, &c.

From what has been said, we must be convinced of the odiousness, wickedness, and danger of the sin of envy.—Let us be cautioned to guard against it; and if we now feel an envious spirit towards any, let us repent of, and forsake this great sin.

3. The last class of sins forbidden by the tenth commandment is *all inordinate motions or affections to any thing that belongs to our neighbour.* This class of sins, may be denominated covetousness, which is an insatiable desire to have what belongs to our neighbour accompanied with dissatisfaction and discontentment, that we have it not. This coveting of what belongs to our neighbour, though it should continue concealed in our own breasts, and never be acted out in endeavours to procure its object, is in direct violation of the very letter of the tenth commandment: But it often breaks out into action. We have

a striking instance of this sin in king Ahab, when he desired the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. He set his heart upon it, and he was willing to give the owner its full value. But Naboth refused to part with it. Ahab ought then to have rested satisfied ; but he did not, he was discontented and must have his neighbour's property at all events; therefore he wrested it from him by force, and murdered the owner. To such lengths does this covetous temper sometimes lead. We may lawfully desire to have our neighbour's property at a fair price, if he is willing to dispose of it. In this there is nothing improper. But if he is not willing to dispose of it, we ought to give it up and cease to desire it. Coveting what belongs to another is repeatedly forbidden in other passages of Scripture besides the tenth commandment. The Psalmist said, "The covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth ;" Ps. x. 3. The prophet Micah pronounced a woe against those, who " covet fields, and take them away by violence, and houses, and take them away ;" Mic. ii. 2. The prophet Habakkuk also cried " Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house ;" Hab. ii. 9. Our Saviour warned his disciples, " Take heed and beware of covetousness ;" Luk xii. 15. And the apostle Paul declared, " This ye know, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God ;" Eph. v. 5. And he exhorted, " Let your conversation be without covetousness ;" Heb. xiii. 5.

Thus I have endeavoured to illustrate the duties required, and the sins forbidden in the tenth commandment.

From what has been said, let us learn, in whatsoever state we are therewith to be content ; and while we are, in a lawful way, endeavouring to better our condition, still, if Providence sees fit not to crown our labours with success, let us be content with his allotments and resigned to his will. Let us learn to exercise a charitable frame of spirit towards our neighbour, and to desire and seek his good, rejoice in his welfare, and sympathize in his afflictions. Let us guard against all discontentment and fretfulness, and impatience, and murmuring, and repining. And if any of us are now under the influence of such a temper, let us cease from indulging it. And let us lay aside and guard against all envy, and all coveting of any thing which belongs to our neighbour.

From this commandment let us learn also that the law of God is spiritual. It is true that all the commandments require a spiritual or heart obedience; but this does not so clearly appear from the letter of the other commandments, as from this. The others in their letter, look at external actions; but this looks directly at the heart,—"Thou shalt not covet;" for this is an exercise of the heart. It was this commandment particularly that fastened conviction of his exceeding sinfulness on the mind of Paul; "For, (said he) I had not known lust, except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." And, "when the commandment, (this same commandment) came, sin revived and I died;" Rom. vii. 7, 9. Brethren let an attention to this same commandment produce a similar effect upon us. The law is spiritual, it reaches the inmost thoughts and desires: and it forbids the first motions of the mind towards sinful actions. And must we not on a review of our lives acknowledge that we have in the thoughts, desires, and motions of our minds, broken the law innumerable times? Undoubtedly we must. Consider then again, that it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" Gal. iii. 10. We have therefore incurred this curse innumerable times; and this curse is eternal death. Let us hence learn our absolute need of a Saviour, and of salvation by him. And let the law to which we have for some time been attending, and the lectures on which, we have now brought to a close, be our schoolmaster, to bring us to Christ that we may be justified by faith. By the law, brethren we are cursed, and condemned to eternal death. Our only hope of salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great law-fulfiller, who endured the curse of the law by being made a curse for us, and thus opened a way of redemption for us. Let us therefore with the apostle Paul, make it our grand concern to "be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;" Phil. iii. 9. And being delivered from the law as a covenant of life, through union to Christ by faith, let us take it as the rule of our life, and regulate our conduct according to its holy precepts; for "faith without works is dead;" Jam. ii. 26. That faith which unites to Christ, and is connected with

justification, is a living faith, productive of holiness, or obedience to God's holy law. And in vain do any hope for deliverance from the curse of the law on account of what Christ has done, while they are the servants of sin, and are not careful to depart from all iniquity, and to keep God's holy commandments. May the Lord write his laws upon our hearts, and give us grace to keep them. —AMEN.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

PERFECTION.

1 JOHN I. 8.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

We have in a series of discourses attended to the moral law, as summarily comprehended in the ten commandments. To this law the great lawgiver requires perfect obedience, and we are in duty bound to render it. But no mere man since the fall has in this life rendered this obedience, or can do it. This is taught in our text. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In these words the Apostle teaches, that no man, whatever his attainments may be, can with truth say, that he now has no sin; that if any should thus say, they would deceive themselves; and that such an assertion, would be a convincing proof that a person continued a stranger to his own heart, and that the truth was not in him, or that he had never experienced the saving grace of God.

The doctrine of the text is that there is no sinless perfection among mankind in this world.

This doctrine is stated in our catechism in the answer to the 82nd question as follows:

Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?

No mere man since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word and deed."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate, prove, and defend this doctrine.

I. Let us attend to an *illustration* of the doctrine. When it is said that no man is perfect, the expression is intended to apply, not only to the unregenerate, but also to the regenerate; or to the child of God, whose sins are pardoned, as well as to the sinner, who is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity; and not only to the true christian who has lately become such, and who is yet but a babe in Christ, but also to the established believer, who has been long walking in the narrow way, and who has attained to the highest degree of perfection attainable in the present life.

And here I would remark that this imperfection is to be understood of fallen man. "No man *since the fall* is able." Our first parents before the fall were capable of rendering a perfect obedience; for God made them upright, or perfectly holy, and without any inclination to sin in their nature. And they did perfectly keep the law, until by their fall, they lost the image of God and the moral power of doing good.

Again the universal imperfection of fallen man is to be restricted to the present life. "No man since the fall is able *in this life.*" After this life the saints will be able, through the grace of God, perfectly to keep all his commandments: for saints in heaven are called, "the spirits of just men made perfect;" Heb. xii. 23.

We may remark again, that when it is said, "No man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God,"—we must understand Christ to be excepted. Hence it is said, "No *mere* man." Christ though really and truly a man, was not a *mere* man, or only man. He was God as well as man. He perfectly kept the commandments. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" 1 Pet. ii. 22. He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" Heb. vii. 26.

But with the exception of Christ, it is universally true, that no man, whether unregenerate or regenerate, since the fall, hath kept, or is able, either by his own natural powers, or by any grace received, perfectly to keep the

commandments of God ; but doth daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

II. We proceed to *prove*, this doctrine.

1. Its truth may be argued from what the Scriptures teach concerning the two contrary principles of sin and grace, continually at war with each other in the believer. As in Gal. v. 17 ; "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. And more fully in the epistle to the Romans, chap. vii. ; "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not : for what I would, that do I not ; but what I hate, that do I. It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know, that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing ; for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good that I would I do not : but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members. O wretched man that I am ! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God ; but with the flesh the law of sin." This epistle was written near thirty years after the conversion of Paul, and but a few years before his death : and he still found within him remains of sin which occasioned a continual warfare with the principle of grace implanted by the Spirit of God. Paul, thirty years after his conversion, knew nothing of sinless perfection. This is at least a presumptive argument, that it is not attainable by christians in the present life. For surely if perfection is attainable here, we would suppose that Paul would have attained to it, by the time that he wrote this epistle.

The great objection to the argument drawn from the experience of Paul in the passage just quoted, is, that the Apostle here spake of an unregenerate person, or of himself in an unregenerate state, while under conviction of sin. In answer to this we may observe that Paul, in this passage, used the first person *I*, and therefore plainly

spake of himself. "*I* am carnal. When *I* would do good, evil is present with *me*, &c. And he spake in the present tense, of his state as it then was when he wrote this epistle. Not I *was*, but I *am* carnal. That which I *do* I *allow* not, not that which I *did* I *allowed* not. In my flesh *dwelleth*, not *dwelt* no good thing ; and so through the whole passage. Language could not more plainly teach that Paul, in this discourse, meant himself, and described his exercises as they then were when he wrote this, and when he evidently was, and long had been a christian. Besides in this passage he spake several things of himself which could belong to no one but a regenerate person. He spake of a principle within him opposed to sin, and leading him sincerely to will to do good; and he spake of himself as consenting to the law that it was good, as delighting in the law of God after the inward man, and as with his mind serving the law of God. From these considerations, we conclude that the Apostle in the passage quoted, spake of himself as a christian ; and of his habitual exercises at the time he wrote this epistle, near 30 years after his conversion. Therefore the objection is not valid, and the argument from this passage against sinless perfection remains good.

2. We may further argue the truth of our doctrine from the Lord's prayer. This prayer, or the sentiments contained in it we ought daily, as long as we live, to offer up. Now, one of the petitions which in this prayer we are directed daily to offer up, is for the forgiveness of sins ; "forgive us our debts, or trespasses." But if we were free of all sin, and perfect in holiness, there would be no propriety in continuing to offer up this petition, or to pray for the pardon of sin. But since we are daily to pray for the pardon of our sins, it is a clear evidence that we daily need pardon, and therefore daily break the law of God.

3. The same is clearly proved by the express declarations of Scripture ; as in the following texts. "There is no man that sinneth not;" 1 Kings viii. 46. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? Not one." Job xiv. 4. "What is man that he should be clean ? And he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous ?" Job xv. 14. "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" Prov. xx. 9. "There is not a

just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not;" Eccl. vii. 20. "In many things we offend all;" Jam. iii. 2. And in our text the proof is most decisive; "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." These texts teach us as plainly as language can express, that there is no such thing as sinless perfection in the present life.

4. Further this doctrine is confirmed by the testimony of the most eminent saints, whose histories are recorded in the Scriptures. Job, David, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, James, and John, all spake of their own imperfections. And they not only spake of themselves, but united with them, in general terms, all others. And with the experience of the saints of old, I believe the experience of the saints in every age has agreed; and that the more they have grown in knowledge, and grace, the more they have been convinced of their own sinfulness; and instead of being disposed to boast of their perfection in holiness, have been humbled under a sense of their daily sins. Let any one consider the law of God in its great extent, and as reaching in all its particulars to the thoughts, desires, intentions, and other exercises of the soul; and let him compare himself at any time with it, and I believe if he understands the law, and knows himself, and is candid, he will acknowledge that he comes far short of perfect conformity to the law.

From the foregoing arguments we confidently conclude, that the doctrine is true, that "No mere man, since the fall, is able, in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them, in thought, word, and deed."

III. We shall now endeavour to *defend* the doctrine from some objections, which are brought against it.

1. It is objected that some of the saints of old are said in Scripture to have been perfect men. Thus of Noah it is recorded, "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations;" Gen. vi. 9. Of Job we read, "That man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil;" Job i. 1. Hezekiah, in his sickness prayed unto the Lord, "Remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart;" 2 Kings xx. 3. And of Zacharias and Elizabeth, it is recorded, "They were both

righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;" Luk. i. 6. On these passages I would observe that *perfect* as applied to these persons, is to be understood as signifying something short of an entire freedom from sin, and a complete conformity to the law of God. For the testimony of the word of God respecting these persons, and the testimony of some of them themselves prove that by *perfect* here, is not meant a sinless perfection. Besides, the testimony of the word of God against sinless perfection of any of God's people in this life, being express and ample, if these texts which speak of the perfection of some persons, can, consistently with the use of the word, in the sacred volume, be explained in any other sense, the harmony of the Scriptures requires us thus to explain them. But it is certain that the word perfect does not always in Scripture signify without sin. Of this we have a plain proof, Phil. iii. 12, 15. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already *perfect*. Let us therefore, as many as be *perfect*, be thus minded." In these two verses it cannot be that the word perfect means the same thing; for then the Apostle would have contradicted himself, most palpably, in the same breath. In the former verse where the Apostle declared himself *not perfect*, a sinless perfection is evidently meant. In the latter verse therefore, where he spake of himself with other saints as *perfect*, it must be understood of something short of a sinless perfection. The word may mean sincere as opposed to hypocritical; or it may be taken in a comparative sense to denote a greater degree of sanctification; as the Apostle spake of babes and children in Christ, and also of those who had arrived at the stature of perfect men in Christ to denote their greater advances in holiness. In one of these senses, or in some sense short of sinless obedience, may we understand the word *perfect* as applied to the persons above-mentioned; and we are authorized thus to understand it by the use of the word in other parts of Scripture; and the harmony of the Scriptures absolutely requires that we should thus understand it.

2. Another objection to the doctrine we are defending, is drawn from those texts of Scripture in which we are exhorted to perfection; such as the following: "Walk before me and be thou perfect;" Gen. xvii. 1. "Be ye

therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect;" Mat. v. 48. "Perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" 2 Cor. vii. 1. In answer to this objection, we may observe, that the word in these and similar texts may be used in the same sense, in which we have shown it is sometimes used in Scripture, as signifying something short of sinless obedience. But if we are here to take the word in its most proper and highest sense, which is probably the case, still these texts do not prove, that any do perfectly obey these exhortations, and perfectly keep the commandments of God. For God has a right to command us to be perfect, and it is our duty thus to be, though through the depravity of our hearts, we are morally unable to do our duty. Thus notwithstanding the natural enmity of men to God, it is their duty as much as it ever was, to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul and strength and mind, and their neighbour as themselves, and God still commands them to do it.

3. Another objection to our doctrine may be drawn from 1 John iii. 6, 8, 9; "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither known him. He that committeth sin is of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God." This text if it proves any thing in favour of the objector, proves too much; for if strictly taken it will prove, not merely that some of the regenerate have arrived at sinless perfection, but that they all, without a single exception, live without sin; for it equally applies to them all, "*Whosoever*," without any exception, "is born of God doth not commit sin." But the objector himself will not allow this, and therefore a sinless perfection cannot be meant in this text. And that it is not meant is evident from the declaration of the same Apostle in our text, "if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." The Apostle can therefore, in the passage from which the objection is drawn mean nothing more, than that a regenerate person does not live in the commission of any allowed sin. The principle of grace implanted in his heart in regeneration, abiding within him, renders it impossible that he should allow himself in a course of known sin, and continue therein.

Having thus established and defended this doctrine, I would now draw some inferences from it.

1. We learn from this subject that we cannot be saved by our own works. The law of God requires perfect obedience, continually, in thought, word, and deed; and it denounces, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them;" Gal. iii. 10. We have not fully obeyed the law; but on the contrary, times and ways innumerable, have come short and transgressed. Yea we daily transgress in thought, word, and deed. By the law therefore we are condemned and must continue so to be; and are daily becoming more and more guilty, since we are daily adding new transgressions. How deplorable therefore is our state, considered in ourselves, and as under the law! If one transgression incurs the curse, what must be our guilt! For we have sinned, not merely once, but daily, hourly, and continually. Let us brethren, compare ourselves with the law, and be convinced of sin; "For by the law is the knowledge of sin;" Rom. iii. 20. Let us also be deeply sensible of our inability to keep the law, or by our own obedience to escape the merited wrath of God; and therefore our ruined and helpless condition. Hence we infer,

2. The absolute necessity of a Saviour, and of an interest in him in order to salvation. The law must be maintained. And therefore man must perish unless one who has obeyed or engages to obey the law, and by suffering its penalty, has made or engages to make an adequate atonement for sin, becomes his surety. Such a surety is the Lord Jesus Christ, and he alone. He perfectly obeyed the law; and he by his sufferings and death, endured its penalty and thus made a sufficient atonement for sin. And he has righteousness sufficient for the justification of all who will believe in him. While therefore, you are by the law convinced of sin and guilt, and your ruined and helpless condition; let this view of your state convince you of your need of a Saviour, make you thankful for such a remedy, and lead you to flee to Christ and by faith to receive him as the Lord your righteousness, that through his imputed righteousness you may receive the pardon of your sins and be delivered from the curse of the law, which you have incurred by your sins.

3. Though perfection, through the depravity of our nature is not attainable in the present life, it is nevertheless our duty, and christians ought to desire it, and to rest satisfied with nothing short of it. Although we cannot obtain life by the law, it is nevertheless a rule of life; and it is our duty to endeavour to conform our lives to it. And he who is truly delivered from the curse of the law, through union to Christ by faith, will endeavour to keep the law, will desire perfect conformity, and will grieve that he comes short of perfect obedience thereunto. He will consent to the law that it is holy, just and good, and that therefore obedience is his duty; he will look to Christ for strength to enable him to obey it; under a sense of his failings and transgressions, he will be ready often to cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," Rom. vii. 24; and he will never be fully satisfied with his attainments in holiness, until he awakes perfectly in the likeness of his Redeemer; and when his holiest works are done, sensible of his failings and his transgressions and that he has merited nothing; but on the contrary deserves the wrath of God for the imperfections of his best works, he will place his reliance for salvation, not on his own works, but entirely on the imputed righteousness of his Redeemer.

May we all be convinced by the law, of our wretched condition as sinners, and by it be driven to Christ for justification; and as an evidence of our interest in him, love the law of God, take it as the rule of our lives, endeavour to conform ourselves thereunto, and be humbled that we fall so far short of that perfect obedience which is our duty.—Amen.

SERMON LXXXIX.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SINS.

MATTHEW XI. 23, 24.

"*And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*"

Capernaum was a principal city of Galilee. This city had been in a distinguished manner favoured with spiritual privileges. Here Christ much resided; and here he had taught much, and performed many miracles. This city, therefore, was exalted to heaven: that is, it was highly distinguished for spiritual privileges. But, notwithstanding their superior privileges, the inhabitants of this city, generally, continued careless, impenitent and unbelieving. Therefore, the Saviour declared that their punishment should be greater in proportion to the privileges which they enjoyed. "And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell;" that is to a deeper and more intolerable hell, in proportion to the height to which they were raised, by their privileges; as the higher any body is raised, if it fall, the heavier and the deeper will its fall be. The reason which he gave why he pronounced this heavy judgment upon Capernaum was, "For if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Wicked as were the inhabitants of Sodom; yet they were not so wicked as the people of Capernaum. For they had not resisted so much light, nor abused such distinguished privileges; neither were their hearts so hard; for if Christ had appeared among them, preached to them, and wrought miracles in the midst

of them, as he had done in Capernaum, they would have repented of their sins, and thus escaped the judgments of God, and have continued until that day.—Therefore, our Saviour added; "But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment than for thee."

Our text clearly teaches us that *some sins are more aggravated than others.*

The doctrine of the aggravations of sins, we have contained in the answer to the 83d question of our Catechism.

"*Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?*

Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate the doctrine contained in this answer.

It is true that every sin, even the least, deserves the wrath and curse of God forever, and therefore an infinite punishment. This may appear at first view to be an objection against the doctrine, that some sins are more aggravated, and deserve a greater punishment than others. This difficulty is obviated by the consideration, that punishments may be equal in duration, and yet not in degree. Punishments may be without end, and thus be infinite in duration, and in this respect equal; but at the same time, one sinner may suffer in the same period much more than another: and thus, though both suffer an infinite punishment, one may suffer more than the other.—Hence, we conclude, that though every sin deserves an infinite punishment, there may be degrees in punishment, and consequently in guilt; and that the infinite heinousness of all sin, forms no objection against the doctrine that some sins are more aggravated, and deserve, and unless repented of, will receive a greater punishment than others. This doctrine is most clearly taught a great many times in the Scriptures.

We proceed to illustrate the doctrine.

"Some sins in themselves, are more heinous in the sight of God than others." These sins against the first table of the law, are more heinous than corresponding sins against the second table. Sins committed against God, are more heinous, than the same sins committed more immediately against man. As for instance, it is a greater sin in itself, to

speak evil against God, than to speak evil against our fellow men. It is a greater sin to rebel against God, or to disobey his commands, than to rebel against human authority, or be disobedient to the commands of men. This is proved by the two following texts of Scripture, "If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him:" 1 Sam. ii. 25. And, "against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;" Ps. li. 4. The last verse was spoken by David. In the sin to which he alluded, he had grievously sinned against man; but the sin against God was so much greater, that he seemed in view of it almost to lose sight of the sin committed against man. This is a truth which is very much overlooked; but which ought to be attended to. Many would esteem it very wrong, to do certain kind of actions towards men, when at the same time, they can commit the same kind of actions towards God, without remorse. But sins committed against God, are in themselves worse than the same sins committed against man.

Further, while showing that some sins in themselves are more heinous than others, I would observe, that some sins of the second table, are in themselves more heinous than some of the first. As for instance, murder is a greater sin than sabbath-breaking.

Again, there are some sins of the second table, which are in themselves more heinous than other sins of the same table. Thus murder is more heinous than mere anger, or theft, or lying.

We proceed now to consider the aggravations of sins. "Some sins by reason of several *aggravations* are more heinous in the sight of God than others." In treating of the aggravations of sins, I shall take as my guide that excellent answer in the Larger Catechism, to the question,

"What are those aggravations that make some sins more heinous than others."

The general heads of the answer to this question are the following;

"Sins receive their aggravations—

1. From the persons offending,
2. From the parties offended,
3. From the nature and quality of the offence, and

4. From circumstances of time and place."

1. " Sins receive their aggravations from the persons offending. If they be of riper age, greater experience, or grace, eminent for profession, gifts, place, office, guides to others, and whose example is likely to be followed by others."

It is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed by persons of riper age. For we are told, " with the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days, understanding;" Job. xii. 12. " Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom;" Job. xxxii. 7. It is natural that matured age should have more knowledge, a riper judgment, more prudence, and more stability than youth. And therefore many things which we would be ready to overlook in youth, we would consider very blameable in riper years. As said Paul, " When I was a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things;" 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

It is an aggravation of sin if it be committed by persons of experience, who have seen much of the world, and have observed or felt the sad consequences of evil courses. Sin in such, other things being equal, is worse, than in the inexperienced. For " that servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not and did commit things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few stripes;" Luk. xii. 47. 48. And our own feelings testify that sin in such a character is worse than in one of less experience.

And especially is it an aggravation of sin, if the person has experienced the grace of God. This forms such a powerful check to sin, which the unregenerate have not; and sin in such is the violation of so much greater obligations, arising from the distinguishing goodness and mercy of God, and of such solemn vows and engagements; and it casts such a stumbling-block in the way of others, that in a gracious person it must be more aggravated than in others. And thus our own consciences, when we hearken to their voice teach us; and thus the feelings of mankind generally teach us; for the world generally feel that sin in a christian, and especially in one who has given evidence by his life that he is possessed of true religion, is worse than in one who has never professed nor manifested that he has

experienced the rich grace of God. And sin becomes aggravated in proportion as a person is eminent for profession. This we are taught in what Nathan said to David, " by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme;" 2 Sam. xii. 14. David had been eminent and forward in his profession, and by how much the more eminent he was in this respect, by so much the deeper was the wound inflicted on religion. He had experienced much, and had often spoken of his experiences, and he had instructed and reproved others ; and therefore his sin was the greater, as he had stronger restraints to break through, and as it did the more injury. And so it is still, other things being equal, (which I wish understood in every case) sin in professors of religion is more aggravated than in non-professors ; and the more eminent a person is in profession, the worse is sin in him.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin if the person committing it, be possessed of great gifts. Thus we read, " to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin ;" Jam. iv. 17. That is, in an eminent degree. And that servant which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ;" Luk. xii. 47. 48. And this is agreeable to the common sense of mankind, as appears from what our Saviour immediately added, " To whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." If a person has great natural talents, to acquire a knowledge of his duty, and fitting him for eminent usefulness in the world, more is reasonably expected from him, and he is more criminal for neglecting his duty, or acting contrary thereunto than one who has not such gifts.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if the person committing it be in an eminent place or station, hold a high office, is a guide to others, and his example is likely to be followed by others. The same sin in a ruler is greater than in the subject. Thus David's station was mentioned by the prophet Nathan, as an aggravation of his sin. " And Nathan said to David,—thus saith the Lord God of Israel. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight." 2 Sam. xii. 7, 9. Magistrates are ordained to be a terror to evil-doers. Their

business is to punish crimes in others. Therefore sin in them, is, in addition to what it is in others, a violation of the duties of their office, as it unfits them to perform these duties aright; or if they do attempt to perform them, they undo with one hand, what they attempt to do with the other. And as their station gives them great influence in society, their example is the more pernicious.

The same is true of parents and masters; for their children and servants look up to them for example, and their evil example will be likely to do more injury than if they did not stand in these relations. Besides, by their own sins, their mouths will be stopped, so that they will scarcely be able to reprove or restrain sin in those under their care.

The same remarks may be made with respect to officers in the church. Sin in them is more aggravated than in a private christian. For they are peculiarly a city set on an hill, that cannot be hid. Superior circumspection is expected from them, their example has great influence, and their sins give great offence, and are calculated to do great mischief. Especially is sin more aggravated in a minister of the gospel, than in private christians, or than in inferior church officers. For they are especially looked up to as examples of holy living; and their example if if it be wrong, is calculated to do more injury, and to wound the cause of Christ more, than that of any other christian. That sin in a minister is aggravated by the office which he sustains, the apostle Paul taught when he said, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you;" Rom. ii. 21, &c.

II. "Sins receive their aggravations—from the *parties offended.* If immediately against God, his attributes and worship; against Christ and his grace; the Holy Spirit, his witness and workings; against superiors, men of eminency, and such as we stand especially related and engaged unto; against any of the saints, particularly weak brethren, the souls of them or any other; and the common good of all or of many."

Some sins are, more than others, immediately against

God, his being, perfections, and worship. These sins are on this account more aggravated than the same kind of sins committed against man. Thus it was mentioned by Peter as a great aggravation of the sin of Ananias, "thou hast not lied unto men but unto God;" Acts v. 4. The sins of this class are such as strike at the being of a God, or of the true God, as atheism and idolatry; such as either speculatively or practically deny any of the perfections of God, as his power, wisdom, omniscience, goodness, mercy, &c.; and such as profane and cast contempt upon his ordinances, like the deceiver spoken of by Malachi, against whom he pronounced a curse, "Cursed be the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great King saith the Lord of hosts;" Mal. i. 14. And like the Corinthians who were severely blamed and threatened for their disorderly and irreverent approach to the Lord's table.

Some sins are more immediately against Christ as a Saviour, and against the grace which he has provided, and which he offers to sinners. These sins are on this account aggravated. Such are the sins of denying the divine nature of Christ, and the atonement which he made for sin. The aggravated nature of these sins is taught in the following passage, 2 Pet. ii. 1; "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Such also is the sin of despising the Saviour, as said the apostle Paul, "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing;" Heb. x. 29. Such also is the sin of neglecting the Saviour and his salvation; as said the Saviour, "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin;" John xv. 22. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light;" John iii. 19. And the Apostle said, "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. To the same class

also belongs the sin of unbelief, as our Saviour taught when he said, "And when he (that is the Holy Spirit) is come he will reprove the world of sin—of sin, because they believe not on me;" John xvi. 8, 9.

Some sins again are more immediately against the Holy Spirit, in the exercise of his office in the work of redemption. Such sins are also very aggravated, from the circumstance of the object against whom they are immediately committed. Such are the sins of resisting, grieving, or quenching the Holy Spirit in his operations, and especially of doing despite unto him. The aggravated nature of such sins, we are taught by the following texts: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, he shall be thought worthy who hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" Heb. x. 29. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come;" Mat. xii. 31, 32.

Again, sins are aggravated, by being committed against superiors and men of eminency. The law of God requires of us to pay respect and deference to age, to eminent characters, and to those clothed with office; and the same sin against such, is worse from the circumstance of the object against whom it is committed, than if it had been committed against an equal or an inferior. Witness God's judgment upon the children of Bethel for their disrespect of Elisha, who was an eminent prophet of the Lord, and a man in years. "There came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him and said unto him, go up thou bald head. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood; and tare forty and two children of them;" 2 Kings ii. 23, 24. It is not probable that the same judgment would have fallen on these children, if they had thus mocked a younger man, and one of inferior character. In proof of the same, the Lord when he reproved Aaron and Miriam for their sedition against Moses, represented the heinousness of their sin, and enforced his reproof by the character of Moses. And the apostle Jude representing the great wickedness

of certain characters spake of them as despising dominion, and speaking evil of dignities ; Jud. 8.

Again, sins are aggravated by being committed against such as we stand especially related and engaged unto. It would be a great sin to deceive or betray any person ; but it would be a still greater sin to deceive or betray a familiar friend. It would be a great sin to murder any person ; but it would be still greater, to murder a friend who had always been kind to us, and laid us under many and great obligations ; and the sin would be still more aggravated, if this friend was a brother or sister, a parent, child, husband, or wife. That such sins are aggravated we are taught by the following texts ; "Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me ;" Ps. xli. 9. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it ;" Prov. xxx. 17.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against any of the saints ; for they are peculiarly dear to God, they bear his image, and are his children. And he hath said, " He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye ;" Zech. ii. 8. And more especially is the sin aggravated, if the persons sinned against, be weak brethren ; for such are not only dear to God in common with all his people, but they will be more likely than other saints to be discouraged and turned out of the way. To this purpose the Apostle spake, "And through thy knowledge shall thy weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ ;" 1 Cor. viii. 11, 12.

Again it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against the souls of any. That is, it is worse to injure the soul of any man than his body, or to sin against his spiritual than his temporal welfare. Because his soul is far more valuable than his body, and an injury done to his soul is much greater than if it had been done to his body.

Finally, it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against the common good of all, or many; that is, the same sin is worse, when it injures the public at large, or many, than when it injures an individual, or only a few ; because the mischief is much greater.

The two remaining heads of aggravations of sins must be postponed to a future opportunity.

Be exhorted in the conclusion of this discourse to reflect on the evil nature of all sin. If any of you have not been guilty of the aggravations, which have been mentioned, do not therefore draw the conclusion that your sins are small; for although some sins are greater than others, yet every sin is great in the sight of God, and deserves his eternal wrath and curse.

And if sin without aggravations be such a great evil, and exposes to such a great punishment, what must it be if committed with those aggravations which have been mentioned? Review this discourse, my hearers, and must not most if not all of you acknowledge, that you have sinned with some of those aggravations which have been considered? Yea, have not some of you sinned with all these aggravations? If you should perish at last, how peculiarly dreadful must be your future misery! The thought is calculated to awaken and alarm. Let it have this effect; and let it lead you without delay to fly for refuge unto that Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, however aggravated.

And let those who have fled to him, and experienced the efficacy of his peace speaking blood, ever keep in mind, that sin in them is peculiarly aggravated; and therefore let them be careful to depart from all iniquity, and to keep consciences void of offence towards God, and towards man.—Amen.

SERMON XC.

AGGRAVATIONS OF SINS.

MATTHEW XI. 23, 24.

"*And thou Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*"

The doctrine deduced from this text in the preceding discourse was, that some sins are more heinous in the sight of God than others. The sources whence sins receive their aggravations were divided into four; viz.

I. The persons offending,

II. The parties offended,

III. The nature and quality of the offence,

IV. Circumstances of time and place.

The first two of these have already been considered. We now proceed to the consideration of the remaining two.

III. Sins receive their aggravations from the *nature* and *quality* of the offence. "If it be against the express letter of the law, break many commandments, contain in it many sins; if not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, scandalize others, and admit of no reparation; if against means, mercies, judgments, light of nature, conviction of conscience, public or private admonition, censures of the church, civil punishments; and our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God or men; if done deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance."

It is an aggravation of sin if it be committed "against the express letter of the law." In proof of this is the fol-

lowing passage; "And the Lord was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded;" 1 Kings xi. 9, 10. Some sins are much more plainly forbidden than others. Of some sins there may be doubts, whether they are sins or not. And although it is sinful to do an action, while we have doubts of its lawfulness, it is much more sinful to do an action, the sinfulness of which is so plain, from the express letter of the law concerning it that there can be no doubt about it. To act against the express letter of the law, manifests great boldness and presumption which greatly aggravate sin.

It is an aggravation of sin, if it "break many commandments, and contain in it many sins." For in this case the crime is complicated, and a person is chargeable, not only with the guilt of one crime, but of many. As for instance, simple drunkenness is a great sin; but if a man when in that state, takes the name of God in vain, and abuses his family, the crime becomes worse. Common sense proves this.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if it is "not only conceived in the heart, but breaks forth in words and actions, and scandalize others." Wrong thoughts, desires, intentions, and affections are wicked. For it is a precept of the divine law, "Thou shalt not covet," which relates chiefly to the soul. And a woe is denounced against them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds; Mic. ii. 1. But the sin is much greater, when our wicked desires and intentions are acted out; because the mischief done is much greater. Thus it is wicked to covet our neighbour's goods; but it is worse to take them. It is very wicked to desire our neighbour's life; but it is far worse to take it away. While wickedness is concealed in the heart, it injures no one, but the person who entertains it. But when it is acted out, the example often has a pernicious influence on others; and the act may scandalize others, and may seriously injure them.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if the act be of such a nature, that the mischief done "admits of no reparation." Thus if we injure a man in his property, we may repair the injury by making restitution. But if we take his life,

or if by our example or advice we ruin his soul, we can never repair the injury. So with respect to ourselves, there are some acts which would irreparably injure us. They would blast our reputation, destroy our usefulness, impair our health, or ruin our property as long as we lived. Such sins are worse, than those which are not attended with such irreparably evil consequences to ourselves or others.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin if it be committed "against means" to prevent it, and lead to a different course of conduct. Our text and context directly apply to this particular. "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment than for you. And thou Capernaum, &c."

It is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against "mercies." Thus it was mentioned as a great aggravation of the wicked conduct of Israel, that they sinned against many mercies. "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise;" Deut. xxxii. 6. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me;" Is. i. 2.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin if it be committed against "judgments." Thus the prophet Jeremiah mentioned it as an aggravation of the sins of the Jews. "Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction;" Jer. v. 3.

It is a further aggravation of sin if it be committed against "the light of nature." There are some sins which the light of nature, independent of revelation teaches to be wrong. These sins are aggravated from the consideration, that they are so clearly wrong, that a person to commit them, must act against the clearest light.

It is a further aggravation of sin if it be committed against "the conviction of conscience." A person must be bold and hardened in wickedness, to act in opposition to the clear convictions of his conscience. That acting against conscience is an aggravation of sin, is taught in the

following passages: "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, do the same;" Rom. i. 32. And "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat;" Rom. xiv. 22, 23.

Again it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against "public or private admonition." For we read, "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy;" Prov. xxix. 1.

Here let us pause and reflect, whether these aggravations are not chargeable upon us. Have not we sinned against means, mercies, judgments, the light of nature, conviction of conscience, and public and private admonition? We have enjoyed many means of knowing our duty. We have our duty clearly revealed to us. We enjoy not only the light of nature in common with the Heathen; and the Scriptures of the Old Testament in common with the Jews; and the instructions of Christ in common with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum; but we enjoy also the instructions of the inspired Apostles; and all the additional light, which from that time to the present, has been shed upon the Scriptures, by the fulfilment of prophecy, and by the labours of the pious and learned. We have not those prejudices to oppose the reception of the gospel, which the inhabitants of Capernaum had. For we have been educated in the belief of it. We have the gospel preached to us, in season and out of season. Most of us have been devoted to God in baptism, and have the seal of his covenant upon us, and thus have been brought into connexion with that body, to which "pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises;" Rom. ix. 4. Many of us have been blessed with pious parents, who not only dedicated us to God in baptism; but also have endeavoured by their pious instructions and example, by their wholesome reproofs and corrections, and by their earnest prayers, to bring us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We have been the subjects of innumerable mercies, temporal and spiritual, personal, domestic, social, civil and religious; and in infancy, childhood, youth, and riper years. Many of us have also

been visited with judgments. We have all been instructed by the judgments of God upon others, and in the world around us. To many of us afflictions have been brought home. We have been disappointed in our pursuits; our friends have sickened and died; our own health has been taken away, and we have been brought to the brink of the grave, and the border of eternity.—And some of you have had your consciences awakened, to reprove you for sin, and to fill your souls with alarm, under a sense of your condition as sinners.

How have we acted under all these means, mercies, judgments, admonitions, and convictions? Have we continued in sin, and remained impenitent amidst them all? If so, our guilt is very aggravated. Like Capernaum, we are exalted to heaven; and in some respects we are privileged above Capernaum. Peculiarly dreadful will be our doom, if we should be lost. Like Capernaum, we shall be cast down to a deeper hell; and it will be far more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for us. And this we have reason to fear will be the dreadful end of many in this place. All the means you have enjoyed, all the mercies you have received, all the judgments with which you have been visited, all the public and private admonitions which have been given you, and all the convictions of conscience you have had, if you should die impenitent, will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you, and aggravate your guilt and future misery.

We proceed to the consideration of other aggravations of sins.

It is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against the "censures of the church and civil punishments." "If he neglect to hear the church (said Christ) let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican;" Mat. xviii. 17. Both church censures and civil punishments are calculated to restrain men, and to lead them to repentance; and it is therefore an aggravation of sin, if committed against these restraints.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed against "our prayers, purposes, promises, vows, covenants, and engagements to God, or men." There are many who pray against sin, and then commit it. This is an aggravation, as it is mocking God, contradicting our prayers, and

breaking through the additional restraints, by them imposed. There are many also who make resolutions and promises of amendment, and yet continue in sin in opposition to them. Hereby they break through greater restraints, and add to their other sins, the sin of violating resolutions and promises. That acting in opposition to our prayers, and breaking our resolutions and promises, are aggravations of sins, are proved by the declaration of the prophet Jeremiah to the Jews. They, calling God to witness, promised, if the prophet would pray for them, they would obey the answer the Lord should give concerning them. But they brake their promises. Therefore Jeremiah denounced the judgments of God against them. "Now therefore," that is, because ye have broken your promises "know certainly that ye shall die by the sword &c;" Jer. xlii. 22. "Have none of you, my hearers, been guilty of thus acting in opposition to your prayers, and violating your purposes and promises? Especially have not some of you in the hour of sickness and distress formed purposes, and made promises which you have not kept? If you continue impenitent they will rise up in judgment against you, and aggravate your doom.

Are there not also, many present who are under vows to God, and who have entered into covenant, and engagements with him; who have violated their vows, and covenant, and engagements? The sins of such are greatly aggravated. For we read, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay;" Eccl. v. 5. And forgetting the covenant of God, and covenant-breaking, whether towards God or men, are mentioned in Scripture as great sins. They who have offered their children in baptism have made vows unto God, and have entered into covenant and engagements. Have not some of you, my hearers, violated your vows, covenant and engagements in this respect. You vowed and engaged to God to bring up your children in his nurture and admonition. Have you done it? And are you doing it? If not, your sin is greatly aggravated by the breach of vows, covenant, and engagements, of which you have been guilty. Baptismal vows and engagements brethren, will in the great day be seen to be, not an unmeaning form, but a solemn business.

Those again who have come to the table of the Lord,

are under vows, have entered professedly into covenant with God, and are under most solemn engagements to him. Sin in such is greatly aggravated, by the violation of vows, covenant, and engagements, with which it is attended.

Again, it is an aggravation of sin, if it be done "deliberately, wilfully, presumptuously, impudently, boastingly, maliciously, frequently, obstinately, with delight, continuance, or relapsing after repentance." To sin deliberately, that is with forethought and contrivance; and to sin wilfully, that is with the full bent of the will, are certainly great aggravations of sin. Sin under such circumstances is certainly far worse, than when committed from the impulse of the moment, under strong temptation, and before a person has time to reflect. To this purpose the Psalmist spake, when he said of the wicked man, "He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil;" Ps. xxxvi. 4.

Presumption, that is, rushing into sinful actions in a daring manner, when judgment, and conscience, and the word of God are clearly known to oppose, is defying God, and is certainly a very great aggravation of sin. To this purpose is the passage, Num. xv. 30; "The soul that doeth aught presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people."

Impudence or committing sin without shame, and boasting of it, either, while in the commission or afterwards, are certainly very aggravating circumstances. Our own feelings prove this; and also the following passage of Scripture spoken in relation to the degenerate Israelites. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush; therefore shall they fall among them that fall;" Jer. vi. 15.

Malice, or doing wickedness from hatred to any one, and a desire or design to injure them; or from hatred to God, and a design to injure his cause, is another great aggravation of sin. Malice is spoken of in Scripture; as one of the greatest sins, and therefore those sins which are committed through malice must hereby be greatly aggravated.

Frequency in sin is also an aggravation. By human laws a man is accounted more guilty for a second or repeated offence of the same kind, than for the first, and is more severely punished. And it was mentioned by the Lord as an aggravation of the sins of Israel in the wilderness, that they had tempted him ten times ; Num. xiv. 22.

Obstinacy also, that is to sin, in opposition to reasons and arguments, with a determination not to be influenced by them, is a great aggravation of sin. In proof of this is the following text: "They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone. Therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts ;" Zech. vii. 11, 12.

To sin with delight, or to take pleasure in the commission of sin is also another aggravation. This is much worse than to do it through the strength of temptation, while we disapprove of it, and struggle against it.

Continuance in sin is also an aggravation. It is much worse to persevere in a course of sin, than to commit it occasionally. Thus Jeremiah speaking of the degenerate Jews said ; "They proceed from evil to evil: and weary themselves to commit iniquity ;" Jer. ix. 3, 5.

Again, relapsing after repentance, or committing a sin, after we have felt deep compunction and sorrow on account of a former commission of it, is a great aggravation. This we are taught by several passages of Scripture of a similar import with the following. "If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, they are again entangled therein, and overcome ; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning ;" 2 Pet. ii. 20.

We proceed to the consideration of the

IV. Class of aggravations of sin ; viz. : circumstances of time and place.

"If on the Lord's day, or other times of divine worship: or immediately before or after these, or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages. If in public, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled."

An action which would be sinful on any day becomes more so when committed on the Lord's day ; because in this case it is a complication of wickedness, including, in addition to what would be sin on any other day, the profanation of the Sabbath.

The same may be said of other times set apart for divine worship, as when the providence of God calls to fasting and mourning for our own sins, and the sins of others. This was charged upon the Israelites as a great sin, by the prophet Isaiah. "In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning; and behold joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine. Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die;" Is. xxii. 12, 14.

Again it is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed immediately before or after divine worship; or other helps to prevent or remedy such miscarriages. It is an aggravation of sin to commit it immediately before, as it tends to unfit us to receive benefit from the worship of God; and it is an aggravation to commit it immediately after, because it must tend effectually to destroy all the impressions we may have received. Besides we must break through restraints which we have not at other times; and it manifests a greater contempt of God, immediately after having been engaged in his worship, to rush into sin.

Once more, sins are aggravated by the circumstance of the place in which they are committed. It is an aggravation of sin, if it be committed in a place dedicated to the worship of God. Christ drave the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and charged them with making a house of prayer, a den of thieves. It is also an aggravation of sin, if it be committed in a public place, or in the presence of others, who are thereby likely to be provoked or defiled. For in this case, persons are chargeable, not only with the guilt of the sin which they commit; but they also become partakers with others in those sins to which they are led by their example.

In the conclusion of this discourse, let us ask ourselves; are not our sins greatly aggravated? Have not all of us sinned with some of the aggravations which have been mentioned? And are there not some who are guilty of most, if not all these aggravations? The condition of such must be dreadful indeed. If I address any such, let them be alarmed at their situation, repent of their sins, and flee for refuge to the Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, however aggravated. Let us all be watchful against these aggravations; and therefore against all sin; for *we*

especially, cannot sin without aggravations. And let me again remind you my hearers, that like Capernaum, you are exalted to heaven; and that if you should perish your doom will be peculiarly dreadful. The inhabitants of Sodom, will have a far more tolerable place in hell, than you.

May God of his infinite mercy, deeply impress this truth on each of our hearts; and may we all be led to escape from the wrath that is to come.—AMEN.

SERMON XCI.

DESERT OF SIN.

ROMANS VI. 23. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*For the wages of sin is death.*"

Sin is here personified under the character of a master, who pays wages to his servants. These wages are death. This is the proper desert of sin. By death in this text we are to understand, not only the miseries of this life, and temporal death; but also, and chiefly, future misery, elsewhere called in Scripture, the second death. That future punishments are particularly and chiefly meant in the text, appears from this consideration, that the Apostle evidently intends a death from which the righteous are delivered. This will appear from an examination of the context. But the righteous are not delivered from temporal death; for this they have to endure as well as the wicked. The Apostle must therefore mean the punishment of sin in a future world, elsewhere denominated the second death. This death is eternal. This appears from the contrast which in our text and context, the Apostle makes, between the death which is the wages of sin, and the life to which holiness leads. The latter is eternal, and therefore the presumption is, that the former is of equal duration. "The wages of sin is death; but the gift

of God is eternal life." And this exposition is confirmed by a great many passages of Scripture, which teach us that the second death, or the punishment of sin in the future world, will be eternal. This is the wages or proper desert of sin. Not merely of some atrocious sins, or of sins often repeated, and long continued in; but of sin generally, and therefore of every sin. The wages, or proper desert of every sin, even the least is death, taken in its most extensive sense.

From the text thus explained, may be drawn the following doctrine in the words of our Catechism in the answer to the 84th Question.

"*What doth every sin deserve.*

Every sin deserveth God's wrath and curse both in this life and that which is to come."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to prove this doctrine.

That every sin deserves a degree of punishment, will probably not be questioned. But that every sin deserves eternal punishment, may not by some be so readily admitted. The latter therefore is the point which we shall endeavour to prove; and this being proved, it will follow of course as the greater includes the less, that every sin, deserves God's wrath and curse in the present life.

1. Every sin deserves eternal punishment, because it is committed *against God.* That every sin is committed against God is taught from the following instances in the Scriptures. When Abimelech king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah, Abraham's wife, supposing her to be his sister, and the Lord reproved him in a dream, and threatened to punish him for it, and Abimelech plead that he had done it in the integrity of his heart, the Lord said unto him, "I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against *me*;" Gen. xx. 6. Here the sin which Abimelech was about to commit, though against Abraham and Sarah, was said to be against God. In like manner when Joseph was tempted to commit an act which would have been immediately against his master, he said, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God;" Gen. xxxix. 9. So also when David was charged by Nathan the prophet, with his sins, in the cases of Uriah and Bathsheba, he ac-

knowledged, "I have sinned against the Lord;" 2 Sam. xii. 13. And in the 51st Psalm, which he wrote on that occasion, he confessed, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;" Ps. li. 4.—In this passage, David confessed that his sin was against God; and not only this, but that its heinousness was chiefly derived from this circumstance. Yea, that the sin as committed against God was so much greater than as committed against man, that man was not worthy of being mentioned at the same time, although the sin was certainly great as committed against man. From the foregoing passages we conclude that every sin is committed against God.

God has forbidden every sin, as well as those sins which have man for their immediate object, as those which are more immediately against him. Therefore every sin is a transgression of his law, and a practical declaration that his law is not right and good. Every sin is against the sovereignty of God, and is a practical denial of his authority, and is therefore rebellion against him. Every sin is against the holiness of God; for sin is that abominable thing which he hates. Every sin is against the justice of God, or his invariable determination to punish sin, and is a practical denial or disregard of his justice. Every sin is against the truth of God; for he has declared that he will punish sin, but the sinner practically denies it. And every sin is also against the goodness of God; for all his laws are calculated to promote the good of his creatures generally; but every sin practically denies the goodness of God in his laws, and therefore opposes his goodness to his creatures. Thus the object against whom every sin is committed, is God.

Now one way in which we form an estimate of the greatness of crimes in society is, from the character of the object against whom the crime is committed. Should we undertake to depict a crime in its worst colours, would we not annex to it such aggravations as the following? It was committed against a man high in station and authority, on whom the happiness of thousands depended; he was the most amiable, and excellent of men, mild, generous, just, delighting in the felicity of others, and devoted to their good. This man was the parent of the culprit, and he had been the kindest and best of parents. Against

such a man was the crime committed. This certainly, in the estimation of the world, would greatly enhance the guilt of the criminal; and his guilt would be increased, in the commission of the same crime, and other circumstances continuing the same, in proportion to the greatness and worthiness of the object against whom his crime was committed.

Apply this to the subject before us. Every sin, as we have seen, is committed against God, his holiness, justice, truth, goodness, and sovereignty, and is a violation of his law, and rebellion against his authority. Now God is the greatest and best of beings. He is infinitely great, and infinitely good. Therefore the object, against which sin is committed is infinite; and hence if a crime derives any turpitude from its object, which as we have seen, it certainly does, sin is *objectively* an infinite evil, and therefore it deserves an infinite punishment; for if it deserves any punishment, it must be a punishment equal to its demerit, which, as has been just proved, is infinite. But the sinner being finite, cannot otherwise suffer an infinite punishment, than by the eternity of its duration; and therefore if sin deserve an infinite punishment, it must deserve God's wrath and curse through eternity.

2. The same may be proved from the *obligations* which every sin violates. It must be admitted that we are under obligations to love, honour and serve a being, in proportion to his worthiness to be loved, honoured, and served. Now God is infinitely worthy to be loved, honoured, and served; for he is infinitely lovely, infinitely glorious, and has an infinite right to authority over us. He is infinitely lovely; for he possesses in and of himself, every possible excellence in an infinite degree. He is infinitely glorious; for he is infinitely exalted above all other beings. And he has an infinite right to authority over us; for he is infinitely fit to reign over the universe, and the only being that is fit; he possesses every possible qualification, requisite to render him completely fit to govern the universe; and he has an absolute property in all his creatures; for he gave them being, he made them for himself, and they are all entirely dependent on him for the constant preservation of their being, and for all the blessings which they enjoy. He therefore undoubtedly has an infinite right to authority over his creatures.

This being the case that God is infinitely lovely, and glorious, and has an infinite right to authority, he of course is infinitely worthy to be loved, honoured, and obeyed by us; and we are under infinite obligations to love, honour, and obey him; for if we are under obligations to love, honour, and obey, in proportion to the worthiness of the object to be loved, honoured, and obeyed, which is a self-evident principle, then God being infinitely worthy, we must be under infinite obligations to love, honour, and obey him. Sin is therefore a violation of infinite obligations. And if by how much the more we are under obligations to do, or not to do a thing, by so much the greater is the criminality of doing wrong, or neglecting our duty, which appears to be plainly true, and agreeable to the common sense of mankind, every sin must be an infinite evil, because every sin violates infinite obligations, and consequently every sin deserves an infinite punishment, and therefore the wrath and curse of God through eternity.

3. The same may be proved from the *tendency* of every sin. Every sin has an infinitely evil tendency, or a tendency to do infinite mischief. By the tendency of an action, we mean, not, what are the actual consequences, but what they might and would be, if it were not for a restraining and preventing power. Thus poison infused into the blood has a *tendency* to destroy a person, though it may not produce this *effect*, being checked in its natural influence, by the superior power of medicine, skilfully administered. But that the poison was prevented by a superior power from killing the man, does not render its nature any better, or the action of him who secretly administered it, any the less wicked. Now sin has an infinitely evil tendency. Every sin is rebellion against the authority of God, and a practical denial of his right to reign, and a practical declaration that he shall not reign. Every sin is also, as has been shown, a practical denial of the holiness, justice, truth, and goodness of God. Every sin therefore has a tendency to rob God of his moral perfections, and to dethrone him. And what would be the effect upon the universe, if God were not holy, just, true, and good? Most assuredly wickedness and misery would every where prevail. And especially, what would be the effect upon the universe, if God were dethroned and his government

to cease? Univeral disorder, and ruin throughout the whole extent of creation, would soon inevitably ensue. And this would certainly be an infinite evil. Such is the tendency of every sin, and that it does not produce these infinitely direful effects, is owing to the impotency of the sinner, and the restraining power of the Almighty. But that it does not produce these effects, does not render sin in itself any thing the less wrong, any more than the stopping of the effect of poison, by the skill of the physician, renders the wickedness of him who administered it the less criminal. Sin therefore having an infinitely evil tendency, is infinitely wrong, and deserves an infinite punishment, and therefore the wrath and curse of God through eternity.

4. We shall come to the same conclusion, if we consider the *atonement* that was made for sin, to open a way for its pardon. From the wisdom of God we may be assured that he will require no greater atonement for sin than was necessary. The atonement which he did require, and which was made, was infinite. For it was made by the sufferings and death, of the Son of God incarnate. The infinite Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, humbled himself to a union with our nature, and in our nature suffered death to make atonement for sin. This atonement being made by an infinite person, giving and sacrificing himself, was doubtless of infinite value. And since a God of infinite wisdom, required an infinite atonement for sin, that it might be consistent with his perfections to forgive it, the conclusion is obvious, that sin must be an infinite evil, deserving an infinite, and therefore an eternal punishment.

5. Once more, our doctrine is abundantly proved by those *declarations of God's word*, which teach that the *future punishment* of the wicked will be *eternal*. Thus we read in the Scriptures, "Depart from me ye cursed into *everlasting* fire;" Mat. xxv. 41. "And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment;" Mat. xxv. 46. "Where their worm *dieth not*, and the fire is *not quenched*;" Mark ix. 44. "Who shall be punished with *everlasting* destruction;" 2 Thes. i. 9. "To whom the mist of darkness is reserved *forever*;" 2 Pet. ii. 17. "To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness *forever*;" Jud. 13. From these texts it is clearly evident, that the punishment of sin in the future world

will be eternal; and it is certain that an infinitely righteous God will not punish sin more than it deserves. Therefore, the conclusion again is evident, that sin does deserve God's wrath and curse, throughout eternity. And since sin generally deserves this, and not merely a number of sins collectively, or some of the more heinous kind, we must conclude that this is the desert of every sin. And agreeably to this conclusion we find, that the curse of the law, to redeem from which, Christ shed his blood, is denounced against every sin; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them;" Gal. iii. 10. This is a clear evidence that not only sin generally, or a number of sins collectively, or some very heinous sins, but that every sin even the least, deserves the curse of the law, which is eternal death.

From the doctrine which has been thus established, we may derive much useful instruction.

1. It teaches us the wonderful patience and condescension of God. Is one sin so great an evil in his sight as to deserve his eternal wrath and curse? how wonderful then is his patience that he bears with sinners so long, amidst so many sins, and so often repeated! And still more wonderful is it, that he should condescend to place his love upon us sinners, and so to love us as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life! Our admiration may well rise still higher, when we consider that his patience is lengthened out to those, who continue to live in sin notwithstanding all this love, and even to those who neglect, reject, and despise the offers of mercy, through Jesus Christ. And to crown all, how wonderful that God should grant the special influences of his Spirit, to change the hearts of such creatures, make them willing in the day of his power, and through grace, fit them for those mansions of glory, which he hath prepared for them that love him! We may well, in view of this subject of the desert of sin, be filled with adoring wonder, at the patience and condescension of God. And will any of you my hearers, continue to abuse this patience? Will you make the experiment, how far the patience of the sin-hating God will bear with you? It is an extremely dangerous, and will be a fatal experiment. "Despisest thou the

riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering: not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God;" Rom. ii. 4, 5. Such will be the consequence of abusing and despising the amazing patience of God. The day of righteous retribution is fast hastening on, and when vengeance does fall, it will fall with the more dreadful weight in proportion to the long-suffering exercised.

2. Our subject corrects an error into which many fall, that some sins are small or trivial. It is true that some sins are more heinous than others, but no sin is small. Every sin is committed against an infinitely great Being; every sin violates infinite obligations; every sin has an infinitely evil tendency, every sin can be atoned for, and forgiven only by the blood of Christ; in short, every sin is an infinite evil, and deserves the wrath and curse of God through eternity. Can any sin, then be small? Certainly not. Think of this subject, ye who can plead for some sins and commit them without remorse, because you suppose them to be small. Consider the object against whom the smallest sins are committed, the obligations which they violate, and their tendency; consider well the character, sufferings and death of Christ, without whose death, the smallest sin could not be pardoned; and consider the terrible nature of that curse, which is denounced against every sin; and then cease to call any sin small, or to venture, upon it because it is small.

3. Our subject is calculated to alarm the secure; and ought to lead them to flee without delay from the dreadful wrath that awaits the sinner. Is it true that one sin even the least, deserves God's wrath and curse through eternity? What then, O careless sinner dost thou deserve, who hast lived in the world for twenty, thirty, fifty, and perhaps seventy years, and hast been sinning every day of thy life, yea every hour, and continually? And this too with many and great aggravations? Think of this subject. Consider what a weight of guilt must press upon you, and what an unspeakably dreadful punishment you deserve, and awaits you. Can you in view of this subject continue to make light of sin, or as some have done to

make a mock at sin? Truly as the wise man said, "Fools make a mock at sin;" Prov. xiv. 9.

Can you, my hearers, whose sins are yet unpardoned, continue, in view of this subject unconcerned? When one sin deserves the wrath and curse of God forever, and will soon receive this desert, unless pardoned; and when you have sinned not only once, but innumerable times? O awake, careless sinner, who art sleeping on the brink of an unspeakably dreadful and eternal hell! Consider your situation; and be filled with anxiety to know, whether there is any hope for you, whither you may flee for safety, and how you may escape.

Do any of you make these inquiries? You are answered, there is hope. An infinite atonement as you have heard has been made for sin. God can now be just and yet the justifier of the sinner. He offers you pardon and everlasting life through Jesus Christ. He is willing that you should be saved; for he has declared, "As I live I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live;" Ezek. xxxiii. 11. He offers you salvation, and urges it upon you. Accept the offer on gospel terms. Flee to Christ by faith, receive him as he is offered, trust to his righteousness for pardon and acceptance, and devote yourselves to him to walk with him in the ways of new obedience, and you shall be saved. And O my hearers be exhorted not to delay; what you do, do quickly. You who are out of Christ are in an unspeakably dreadful condition; and life is uncertain. Before you are aware, and while you are sleeping in sin, God may say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." Yea, while you are dreaming of days and years to come, God may say, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." And what follows? The worm that dieth not, the fire that is not quenched, the mist and blackness of darkness, forever and ever.

May the Lord of his infinite mercy, have mercy on careless sinners, awaken them to a sense of their condition, and deliver them from that second and eternal death, which is the wages of sin.—Amen.

SERMON XCII.

MEANS OF GRACE.

PROVERBS VIII. 34.

"*Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.*"

The speaker throughout this chapter is wisdom, by whom we are most probably to understand Christ, acting in his prophetical office. By the expressions in the text, "Watching at my gates," and "waiting at the posts of my doors," we are undoubtedly to understand a diligent use of the means of grace. To those who use these means aright, a blessing is promised. "*Blessed* is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors."

These words thus understood may lead us to speak of the *means of grace.*

The outward and ordinary means of grace we have stated in the answer to the 88th question of our Catechism.

"*What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?*

The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ comunicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all of which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

The application of redemption, or the production and maintenance in the soul, of those graces which are necessary to salvation, is *a divine work.* This is abundantly evident from the Scriptures. As from the following passages among others: "Except a man be born of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" John iii. 5. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God;" John i. 12, 13. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not

of yourselves ; it is the gift of God ;" Eph. ii. 8. "Him (viz. Christ) hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance ;" Acts v. 31. From these and many other texts it is clearly evident, that these graces to which the promises of life are made, are not produced by the mere natural powers of sinful man, but by God himself.

But nevertheless the Lord uses means in this work. He could work without means. He could convince and convert the sinner, and work and maintain in him all those graces which are necessary to salvation, without means, if he thought proper. But he has determined ordinarily to work by means ; and we have not the least ground to hope for the divine blessing, while we live in the neglect of those means which he hath thought proper to appoint. That God has determined to work by means in the application of redemption to the souls of sinners, the Scriptures clearly teach. When Cornelius was to be instructed into a knowledge of the way of salvation, an angel was sent to him, not to give him the necessary information, which he might easily have done, but to direct him to send for Peter a minister of Christ. When the Lord had a work to do in Macedonia, Paul was in a vision directed to go thither. And we are told, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe ;" 1 Cor. i. 21. And, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God ;" Rom. x. 17. And, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God ;" 1 Pet. i. 23.

The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption, are *his ordinances ;* or such means as he hath ordained and appointed in his word, and commanded to be observed, and no other. In using other means than those which God hath appointed, because we suppose they are calculated to affect the passions, and bring men to embrace salvation, or carry on this work where it is begun, we have no right to expect they will do us good, and produce a saving effect ; for as has been shown, means become effectual only by the blessing of God, and he knows what means are best, and he has instituted those means, which in his infinite wisdom he judged to be best ; and it is an impeachment of his wisdom, when, as has often been done, men contrive others.

Yea, we not only have no reason to expect that God will bless such ordinances as have been invented by men, and not instituted by himself; but on the contrary, we have every reason to believe that he will be displeased. For this our Saviour condemned the Pharisees, when he said, "in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men;" Mat. xv. 9. And again we read, "why are ye subject to ordinances, after the commandments and doctrines, of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship;" Col. ii. 20, 22, 23. Such is the system of papal superstition, as the use of images, worshipping the host or consecrated elements in the Eucharist, their frequent holidays, abstaining from certain kinds of food at certain seasons, and on certain days, and a great many more superstitions, customs, and ordinances which are the invention of men, and not authorized by the word of God. To those who observe these ordinances of human invention, God saith, "who hath required this at your hand;" Is. i. 12.

The means of grace are therefore, not the ordinances which have been invented by men; but those which God hath appointed in his word. These are, especially, the word, sacraments, and prayer. These are the principal ordinances, by which Christ communicateth the benefits of his redemption. There are others, which are not mentioned, in the answer in the Catechism which we are now considering Such are singing the praises of God, occasional fasting and thanksgiving, when called to them by the Providence of God, and church discipline. The Scriptures clearly teach, that these are odinances of God's appointment. But the word, sacraments, and prayer are the principal.

These ordinances are made *effectual*, by the power of God alone. If he bless in the use of them, they will prove effectual to the salvation of the soul; but if he does not add his special blessing, they will prove ineffectual. This is the doctrine of our Catechism as contained in the answer to the 89th question.

"*How is the word made effectual to salvation?*

The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and building them up in holiness, and comfort through faith unto salvation."

So also with respect to the sacraments in the answer to the 91st question, their efficacy is ascribed entirely to a divine power.

"*How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?*

The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his spirit in them, that by faith receive them."

This doctrine, that the means of grace become effectual only by the power of God, is clearly proved, by observation, experience, and the word of God.

Our constant observation proves it. For among persons of the same character, and sitting under the same means, we see the means prove to some effectual, and to others not. To some they prove a savour of life, and to others a savour of death; and under them some are softened, while others are hardened. These things prove that there is no virtue in means themselves to render them effectual; for if there was, in similar circumstances, they would produce a similar effect. The experience also of those to whom the means of grace have been blessed, proves that they are rendered effectual by the power of God; for they will uniformly acknowledge that the work was the Lord's. And the Scriptures repeatedly teach us this doctrine. The Lord spake by Isaiah, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I send it;" Is. LV. 11. When Lydia sat under the means of grace, with the other women that were assembled with her, she was convinced and converted; but we do not learn that this was the case with any of the others. The reason is given, why the word proved effectual to Lydia, "The Lord opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul;" Acts xvi. 14. In the 1st Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians we read, "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption;" 1 Cor. i. 30. In this passage the whole work of Salvation, from beginning to end, is ascribed to God. In the same Epistle we again read, "I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then

neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase;" 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. Hence it is clearly evident that the means of grace become effectual by the power of God alone; and unless this power accompanies them, they will prove ineffectual.

But notwithstanding the increase, or the effect of means, is of God, still it is our duty to *use* them, and we have not the least ground to expect the divine blessing in the neglect of them.

With respect to the unconverted, although means, of themselves will never convert them, neither will they convert themselves in the use of means, nor is there any certainty that if they do externally wait upon the means, that God will convert them in the use of them; yet there is much more hope, that they will be converted under the means of grace, than when they withdraw from them.—Both the word of God and constant observation prove the truth of this. God has commanded the use of them, and this is a sufficient reason why they should be used, although of themselves, they never can convert us. And this command lays a foundation to hope, that the Lord will bless in the use of them. The command of God lays a sufficient foundation for the use of the means of grace, even though we could see no natural connexion between the means and the end. For there was no natural connexion, between the blowing of the ram's horns around the walls of Jericho; but God commanded it, and the Israelites obeyed, and the walls fell. There was also no natural connexion between Ezekiel's prophesying to the dry bones and their living; but God commanded it, the prophet obeyed, and the bones lived. Again there was no natural connexion that we can discover, between Naaman dipping himself seven times in Jordan, and the cure of his leprosy, but God commanded it, and if he had not obeyed, or if he had used other waters, he would not have been healed. So the mere command of God is a sufficient reason why the means should be used, and an encouragement to use them with a hope of receiving benefit, although the means of themselves will never prove effectual, and although neither is he that planteth anything, neither is he that watereth: but God that giveth the in-

Besides we know that the means of grace, and especially the word, are used by the Holy Spirit, as instrumental in the conversion of sinners. By the word he convinces of sin, and shows the sinner his ruined condition. He makes use of the word as a fire and hammer to break the flinty heart. And by the word, he discovers to the sinner his delusive dreams, and slays his false peace, and hopes and joys. "I through the law, (said Paul) am dead to the law, that I might live unto God;" Gal. ii. 19. In this verse we have probably the chief, if not the sole use of means to the unregenerate. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, carrying home truth with power to the soul, they have a natural tendency to teach the sinner that he can do nothing, and that he lies entirely at mercy, and is dependent on the sovreign grace of God; and to bring him down to that death spoken of by the Apostle in the text just quoted, and also in the following, "when the commandment came sin revived and I died." Rom. vii. 9. When the unconverted are brought to this state, means have had their effect with respect to them. They have prepared the way under the powerful influence of the spirit of God, for this divine agent, to infuse spiritual life, and thus fit the soul to live unto God.

Then the same means, which before conversion were of use under the powerful influence of the spirit of God, to slay the sinner, become of use to cherish spiritual life, and to enable him to bring forth holy fruit to the praise and glory of God. The use of means to the unconverted is to pull them down; but to the people of God, their use is to build them up. But in neither will they have the effect, unless through the special influence of the Holy Spirit. But at the same time, we have no ground to hope, either from the word of God, or his dealings with mankind, that the Spirit will exercise his powerful influence, either to convince and convert the the careless, or to comfort and build up the regenerate, without the instrumentality of means; and we ought therefore to be in the use of means that they may be instrumental in the hands of the divine spirit to our saving benefit.

In the application of this subject, I e exhorted to a diligent use of the means of grace. Like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, who, though not able of himself to

get into the waters when troubled by the angel, yet waited until the Saviour came by and made him whole, so wait at the pool of divine ordinances, until the Spirit come and bless you. Be found watching at the gates, and waiting at the posts of the doors of Wisdom. Even though you are in a natural state, there is much more hope, that you will be blessed in so doing, than in neglecting an external attendance upon the means of grace. The reason of this opinion is, not that hereby you merit the favour of God, or that God has promised to bless you in the external use of means, while in an unconverted state ; but because we see that generally they are those, who are diligent in the external use of means, that do receive the divine blessing. But while facts prove this ; still, it is a great sin to sit under the means of grace, and not improve them. It is a great sin to live without prayer; and it is also a great sin to pray in a careless manner, insincerely, and from wrong motives, and with an unholy frame of heart. To neglect the Bible, and not peruse it, or to neglect the public worship of God's house are great sins; and so also are reading the Scriptures, or hearing the word in a careless and unprofitable manner. It is a great sin to neglect any of the ordinances of God's appointment ; and it is also a great sin to attend upon any of them in an improper manner ; for " the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord ;" Prov. xv. 8.

From these observations, the question will naturally arise, what shall the wicked do? If they neglect the means of grace they sin, and if they use them with their present tempers they sin. What shall they do ? I answer with the word of God, " Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord ;" Is. lv. 7. " Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" Acts. iii. 19. " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ ;" Acts xvi. 31. And use the means of grace with that temper with which you ought to use them. This is your immediate duty ; and the necessity of divine influences to enable you thus to do, by no means releases you from the duty ; for this necessity arises from the sinner's indisposition to do his duty, which instead of excusing him, the stronger it is, the more guilty he is. You are exhorted to use the means of grace, you are also exhorted to use them aright and not to mock the

heart-searching God; and with this exhortation I must leave you in the hands of a sovereign God.

In the application of this subject, the people of God are especially exhorted to a diligent use of the means of grace. In proportion as you neglect them, you may expect that your souls will languish, but in proportion as you are diligent in the right use of them, you may expect to be builded up in holiness and comfort, through faith unto salvation. There are many precious promises to those who use the means of grace aright. In our text we have such a promise, "Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." In other places we read; "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding: if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures: then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord; and find the knowledge of God;" Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. they shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;" Ps. xcii. 13, 14. "I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain;" Is. xlv. 19. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint;" Is. xl. 31. Be diligent therefore in the right use of the means of grace which God hath appointed, that you may receive the divine blessing, and grow in grace, and increase in spiritual comforts.

Be *daily* in the use of the means of grace; for it is worthy of observation that this is the exhortation of our text, "Watching *daily* at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors." Many seem to think, we have nothing to do with the means of grace, except on the Sabbath. We have reason to fear that such attend to them very little as they ought, even on the Sabbath. Especially there are many who seem to think, we have nothing to do with public worship on any other day. Many prove this, by their conduct in uniformly absenting themselves, and some have not hesitated to express it. But our text is directly against them, where the man is pronounced blessed, who watches *daily* at the gates, and waits at the posts of the doors of wisdom. And many other parts of the Bible are against them. Ministers are commanded to "Preach the word,

be instant in season, out of season;" 2 Tim. iv. 2. And if it is their duty to preach the word out of the stated seasons, as well as in them, it is unquestionably the duty of people to wait upon the word thus preached. After the day of Pentecost the disciples of our Lord, "Continued *daily* with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, praising God. And the Lord added to the church *daily* such as should be saved;" Acts ii. 46, 47.

It is true we have other duties to perform besides the immediate worship of God. But can we not perform both? Men of the world can find time for vain amusements, feasting, and the like, and yet attend to business, and do not suppose that they encroach upon the time that ought to be devoted to their worldly concerns. But they who redeem from business, to attend the worship of God, on other days besides the Sabbath, half as much time, as is spent by the people of the world in idleness, vain amusements, and dissipation, are oftentimes censured as inattentive to their duty, in neglecting their worldly concerns.

Brethren, the judgment day will set this matter right; and we shall then see whose conduct will receive the approbation of their Master. Whether theirs who redeemed time from the world, to engage an hour with the people of God in his worship; or theirs, who while they can find time to devote hours to dissipation, neglect the occasional worship of God, and censure those who attend upon it. The secret of the business generally is, not a want of time, but a dislike of the employment. But certainly they who dislike the worship of God on earth, can never with this temper enter heaven, where the worship and service of God will be the continual and delightful employment of its blessed inhabitants. If our hearts were right, and we had a realizing sense of the importance of spiritual and eternal things, there would be no difficulty on this subject. We would find time, and it would be our delight too, if we had opportunity, to watch daily at the gates, and wait at the posts of the doors of Wisdom; and our temporal business would not be neglected.

May the Lord enable us all diligently, and with a proper spirit to wait upon him in his ordinances and bless us in the use of them.—AMEN.

SERMON XCIII.

READING THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN v. 39.

"*Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.*"

The Jews received the Scriptures of the Old Testament as the word of God; and according to them looked for a Saviour to come. But when Jesus, who in every respect answered to the description given of the promised Saviour in the Old Testament, came, they refused to receive him as the expected Messiah. In the chapter which contains our text, we find Jesus, in conversation with the Jews, endeavouring to convince them of his divine mission, and that he was indeed the Christ; and for this purpose, he referred them in our text to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which they professed to believe.—"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."

The duty here enjoined is incumbent on us as well as the Jews.

Reading the word of God is an important means of grace. That this means may become effectual, we ought to attend to it in a proper manner.

The manner in which it should be attended to, we have pointed out in our Catechism in the answer to the 90th question.

"*How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual unto salvation?*

That the word may become effectual unto salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives."

This answer refers not only to the reading of the word; but also to the hearing of it when preached. In illustra-

ting it therefore, we shall, in separate discourses, attend to the manner in which the word should be read, preached, and heard.

In this discourse we shall attend only to the *reading* of the word, and shall endeavour to show how the word of God ought to be read, and then enforce the duty.

I. Let us attend to the *manner* in which the Scriptures should be read.

1. We ought to read them with *diligence*. The Bereans have set us an example in this respect; and they were commended for it by the Apostle. "These (said he) were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures *daily*, whether those things were so;" Acts xvii. 11. The command to the children of Israel was, "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them *diligently* unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates;" Deut. vi. 6—9. The Lord commanded Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; Josh. i. 8. And David said, describing the good man, "In his law doth he meditate day and night;" Ps. i. 2. All those texts teach us, that it is our duty to read the word of God diligently. We should make it our daily study. No day should pass, except when necessarily prevented, without reading a portion of it; and we ought to make reading the Scriptures a part of our morning and evening devotions. In this way our families, should they neglect to read the Scriptures, individually by themselves, may receive instruction which they otherwise would not obtain.

2. We should read the Scriptures under a *realizing sense that they are indeed the word of God.* We are apt, in a measure, to give credit to what we hear or read, and to estimate its importance from the character of the author. Reading the Scriptures, therefore under a realizing sense,

that they are the word of God, will have a tendency to give credit and weight to what we read. Let us realize when we open our Bibles, that we are treading on holy ground, and that the almighty God, who will be our Judge, speaks in what we are reading. Were we to bring ourselves to realize this, when we read the Scriptures, we would be more likely to derive instruction and profit from them.

3. We ought to read the Scriptures, under a *realizing sense of our own personal and deep concern in them.* The Scriptures speak to every individual, and show what the law of God requires of him, and its penalty in case of transgression. They teach us that we are sinners, and inform us of the dreadful consequences of sin. And they tell us that there is salvation provided, and show us the only way of escape from the ruin brought upon us by sin. In the subject matter of the Scriptures, every one is most deeply concerned. The criminal reads the instrument which contains sentence of death against him, with a deep and awful interest; and he reads his pardon with a deep and joyful interest; and the heir reads his father's will with a deep and lively interest; but no individual is as much concerned in these things, as he is in what is contained in the Scriptures, and therefore they ought to be read under a realizing sense of the personal and deep concern of the reader in them.

4. They ought to be read with a *sincere desire to profit* by them. Some read the Scriptures to find appearances of contradiction to establish their minds in infidelity; and some read them to use them in venting their wit and ridicule against religion. Such, instead of profiting by the Scriptures, wrest them to their own destruction; and may expect to be given up of God to find what they are seeking after, and to be given up to strong delusions to believe a lie, that they may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. There are others again who read the Scriptures, merely from the influence of education, or to quiet conscience, as the formalist prays, and attends public worship, but are indifferent about any profit from them. They who read them in this way can have but little prospect of advantage. To derive advantage from them, we should read them with a sincere desire to profit.

5. The Scriptures ought to be read with *care*, or *attention*. The command of our Saviour in our text is, "Search the Scriptures." The original word is very expressive. It signifies, to search as for a vein of silver. We are not only to read, but to study them, and to seek fully to understand them. We ought carefully to compare different parts, and to attend to the design, connexion, and general scope of passages; for there are many deep things in the Scriptures, which duly to understand, requires, not merely a superficial reading, but a careful searching.

6. When we read the Scriptures we ought to endeavour to *treasure them up in our memories*. David hid the word of the Lord in his heart. Having treasured the word of God up in our memories, we shall have something always at hand to teach us when we go wrong, and to warn us against sin, to direct us in the path of duty when we are halting between two opinions, and to answer a temptation when assaulted with it. We shall also have ready, arguments in prayer, promises to console and support us under trials, and matter to employ our meditations while pursuing our daily business, and in the wakeful hours of the night. Meditation on the Scriptures is an important duty, frequently inculcated in the word of God, and which was frequently practised by the Scripture saints. But unless we treasure the Scriptures in our memory, we cannot perform this duty. Indeed if we read, and immediately forget all we read, we read almost in vain.

7. The Scriptures ought to be read with *self-examination* and *self-application*. When we find a sin forbidden, we ought to consider the prohibition as addressed to ourselves, and we ought to examine ourselves, whether we live in this sin. When we find a course of conduct pointed out that is declared to be inconsistent with the christian character, and to exclude from the kingdom of heaven, we ought to ask ourselves, are we the character, and admit the consequences with respect to ourselves, and be led without delay to forsake such a dangerous course. Again when we read a command of God, we ought to consider the command as addressed to us, and examine ourselves whether we are living in obedience to it. And so also when we read of a trait of the christian character, we

ought to inquire is this our character. In this manner should we read the Scriptures, if we would profit by them.

8. Once more. We ought to read the Scriptures with *prayer*. "In every thing (said an apostle) by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;" Phil. iv. 6. The blessing of God granting the influences of his Spirit, is necessary to enable us savingly to understand the Scriptures, and receive spiritual profit from them. The same power that opened the understandings of the disciples to understand the Scriptures, must open our understandings, or they will be to us, as to their spirituality and power, a sealed book. But the divine constitution is, "Ask, and it shall be given you;" Mat. vii. 7. If then we would profit by reading the Scriptures, we ought to feel our dependence on God, and look to him in prayer, to bless to our spiritual benefit what we read.

Having thus shown how the Scriptures ought to be read, we proceed,

II. To enforce the duty.

1. The first argument I would offer is that the Scriptures are *the word of God*. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" 2 Tim. iii. 16. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" 2 Pet. i. 21. That God has been pleased to give us a revelation of his will, sufficiently indicates that it is our duty to read and become acquainted with it, and that we cannot neglect it without guilt. Has the great God, our Creator, Sovereign, and Judge, condescended to give us a revelation of his will, and shall we live without Bibles in our houses, or shall we permit them to lie on our shelves, and not peruse them, or shall we peruse them so seldom, or so carelessly, as not to become acquainted with their contents? Surely the character of God ought to secure attention to the Bible, which contains his revealed will.

2. Another argument is, that God has *commanded* us to read his word. It is doubtless our duty implicitly to obey all God's commands, and it is at our peril if we do not. Now he has commanded us to read and make ourselves acquainted with the Scriptures. Thus he said to the Israelites, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them, when

thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand; and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates;" Deut. vi. 6—9. And in our text we read, "Search the Scriptures."

3. We argue the duty from the *example* of the *saints* of old; for we are exhorted to be "Followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" Heb. vi. 12. And they studied and highly prized the Scriptures. We hear David in his Psalms expressing himself concerning the word of God as follows: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart. I will meditate in thy precepts. The law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver. O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Mine eyes prevent the night watches; that I might meditate in thy word:" Ps. cxix. Such are some of the expressions which show the high value, that the man after God's own heart, put upon his word. The Bereans were highly commended by the Apostle for their diligent searching the Scriptures. "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so; Acts xvii. 11. Of Apollos it was spoken in high commendation, that he was "Mighty in the Scriptures;" Acts xviii. 24. And to the praise of Timothy it was spoken "That from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures;" 2 Tim. iii. 15. Thus we have the example of the Scripture saints to enforce this duty.

4. Another argument to enforce the reading of the Scriptures is, the *advantages* which may be derived from a careful attention to them.

The Scriptures contain an important and instructive history of events; and this too for the space of near three thousand years, before we have scarcely any light from profane history. They show us as much as any other history the natural causes of the prosperity, decline, and destruction of nations. They contain the best political institutions and maxims. They abound with the purest moral precepts. And they afford us specimens of fine writing unequalled in human compositions. These are

reasons why the Scriptures should be read. Shall we attend to other histories, to other systems of civil policy, and morality, and to other works of taste, and shall we neglect the Scriptures, which are so well calculated to instruct us in these things? But these are advantages of far inferior importance to some which are to be derived from reading the Scriptures.

Reading the Scriptures may be of spiritual and eternal benefit to our immortal souls. They contain God's law; they teach us its penalty; they inform us of our ruined condition as sinners; and they discover to us the only way of escape from merited wrath. But to be more particular, reading the Scriptures is calculated to be of spiritual and eternal advantage to every character, to the careless, the enquiring, and the real christian.

The reading of the Scriptures may prove of spiritual and eternal advantage to the careless. For here they have their character drawn and their doom pointed out, in language calculated to awaken them from their security; and here they are told what they must be to escape from deserved wrath. Reading the Scriptures is one of the means of grace, which the Spirit uses to awaken and convict the sinner, bring him with anxiety to seek salvation, and finally convert and bring him into a state of safety. The word of God is called "The sword of the Spirit;" Eph. vi. 17. And it is said "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" Heb. iv. 12. We also read, "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul;" Ps. xix. 7. And, "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God;" 1 Pet. i. 23. And "Of his own will. begat he us with the word of truth;" Jam. i. 18. Hence we learn that it is of importance to the careless sinner to read the word of God. It may prove to him the sword of the Spirit, and show him his character and danger, and eventually be instrumental in his saving conversion. I dare not say read the word with carelessness and inattention; this would be giving you a license to sin. But I will say *read* it. And if ever you are brought to a saving knowledge of the truth, it will be a grief to you, if you are ignorant of a speculative ac-

quaintance with the Scriptures; and you will find that such a knowledge would be of vast importance to you.

The reading of the Scriptures is also of great importance to the inquiring, and cannot be too earnestly recommended to them. Such feel that they have broken God's law, and have incurred its curse; and they are anxiously inquiring, whether there is any way of escape, and whither, and how they may escape? Now it is the word of God alone that teaches us that there is a way of escape from the wrath to come. It is the word of God alone that teaches us whither we shall flee, viz. to the Lord Jesus Christ, on whom our help is laid, and who is mighty to save. And it is the word of God alone that points out the way to Christ, and lays down the marks of our union to him. In short it is the word of God alone that can answer the all important inquiry of an awakened soul, "What must I do to be saved?" The inquiring soul therefore ought to be much engaged in searching the Scriptures. These are the fountains of religious knowledge. All other books on religious subjects are but the streams. The streams may be polluted; but the fountain is pure. On the instructions of God's word you may rely. And all the instructions you derive from other sources, as from ministers, from God's professing people, and from religious books, ought to be brought to the test of the Scriptures. "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them;" Is. viii. 20. When you come to your minister for direction, all the direction that he can give you, that will be of service to you, must be drawn from the word of God. Be exhorted therefore to a diligent, careful and prayerful examination of the Scriptures for yourselves. Most probably one principal reason, why some continue so long in darkness, is, an ignorance of the Scriptures; and also, most probably, one principal reason of the false hopes and joys of many is their ignorance of the Scriptures; they are ignorant of what is the Scriptural character of the christian. From all these considerations the inquiring may see the great importance to them of searching the Scriptures.

Again, reading the word of God is of great importance to the real christian. The Bible is the rule by which he is to walk as a subject of the kingdom of Christ. It is the

charter of his privileges as a citizen of Zion. It is the testament of his heavenly Father, in which he has bequeathed to him as his adopted son a heavenly inheritance. It is a map of the way which leads to the promised land. It is the compass to direct him to the haven of eternal rest. And it is a lamp unto his feet, and a light unto his path, while passing through the dark wilderness of this world. Does it become a good citizen to know the laws by which he is to be governed; and is it of importance that he should become acquainted with his privileges? Does the heir take an interest in, and endeavour to know every item of his father's will, especially as far as he himself is concerned? Does the traveller in a strange and dangerous country prize and examine his map? Is the compass of importance to the mariner and does he so esteem it? And is a light useful, to guide our steps in a narrow, dark, and dangerous path? Far more important than any of these is the word of God. Would you christians see the importance of reading the Scriptures and becoming intimately acquainted with them, read attentively the 119th Psalm, and you may see a great variety of benefits resulting to the child of God, from an acquaintance with the Scriptures.

It is of importance that the christian should always be able, among the different pursuits which may present themselves, to know the path of duty; that he should have at hand an answer to temptations; that he should be able to give to every man that asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him; that he should have arguments in prayer; and that he should be able to rely on the promises and plead them? Then it is of importance, that he should diligently attend to the word of God, and treasure it up in his heart.

The word of God is of great use to sanctify the soul, "Sanctify them (said the Saviour) through thy truth; thy word is truth;" John xvii. 17. It is of use to make the christian stable, so as not to be liable to continual wavering, and to be driven about by every wind of doctrine. It is of use to keep him from sin; and to subdue his corruptions, and mortify indwelling sin. "All Scripture (said the Apostle) is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thorough-

ly furnished unto all good works;" 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. "Wherewith (asked the Psalmist) shall a young man cleanse his way?" he answered, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word;" Ps. cxix. 9. Again he said in the same Psalm, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." And "through thy precepts, I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." Again, the word of God is of use to support and comfort the soul of the christian, under afflictions. "Unless thy law (said the Psalmist) had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. This is my comfort in my affliction. I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage;" Ps. cxix. 92, 50, 52, 54. Again the word of God is of use to quicken and strengthen the christian. "Thy word (said the Psalmist) hath quickened me. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word;" Ps. cxix. 50, 28. The word of God is also of use to advance the christian in the knowledge of divine things. Paul said to Timothy, "The Holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation;" 2 Tim. iii. 15. And in the Psalms we read, "The testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;" Ps. xix. 7, 8. "The entrance of thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple;" Ps. cxix. 130. "Thou through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients: because I keep thy precepts;" Ps. cxix. 98, 99, 100.

Such are the advantages to be derived from the word of God. But it is evident that to receive these advantages you must treasure the Scriptures in your minds, and therefore read them.

Let me now press upon you all, the duty of searching the Scriptures. Consider who is their author, that he commands it, and that the duty is enforced by the example of the saints, who are proposed to us for our imitation. Consider the instructions which they contain. Consider their spiritual and eternal use—that they are of use to awaken the careless, to direct the inquiring, and to enligh-

ten, guide, establish, sanctify, support, comfort, quicken and strengthen the christian; and be exhorted diligently to read the Scriptures. Read them under a realizing sense that they are indeed the word of God, and of your own personal and deep concern in them; read them with a sincere desire to profit by them; read them with care; treasure their contents in your memory; read them with self-application, and self-examination; and read them with prayer, feeling your dependence on God to make them effectual, and looking to him for the influences of his Spirit.

The Bible, my brethren is an invaluable gift bestowed upon us. God has in this respect highly distinguished us above the heathen; and also above our fathers who lived before the invention of the art of printing, and even above the generations which have immediately preceded us. The poorest may now have Bibles. Those noble institutions of modern days, Bible Societies, have placed the Holy Scriptures within the reach of the poorest. And in view of the importance of the Bible, ought we not to be grateful to God, for those benevolent institutions, which are multiplying copies of this precious book, and which are sending this divine treasure into the cottages of the poor, and even to the millions of the Pagan world? Let us realize our privileges, and improve them; for we must one day give a solemn account. And our condemnation will be great indeed, if we should be found at last to have neglected the Scriptures and should perish from under the light, which we enjoy. You must my hearers, one day or other become acquainted with the Scriptures: for in the judgment day, this book will be opened, and you will be tried and judged by it.

And here in view of this subject I feel constrained to remark with gratitude and joy, that although we have reason to fear, many among us still neglect the Scriptures, yet there is an increasing attention to searching them, especially among the young. It is a most promising circumstance, that the Bible which through the influence of infidelity, was a few years since almost banished from schools, has now resumed its place, and a far more important place, than it before occupied; and that the youth in our congregations, and schools, and even in our colleges, are with interest engaged in the study of the

sacred Scriptures. May the knowledge of this sacred word increase, until "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea;" Is. xi. 9.—AMEN.

SERMON XCIV.

PREACHING THE WORD.

2 TIMOTHY IV. 1, 2.

"*I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.*"

The *preaching of the word* is one of those means which Christ hath appointed in his church, for the conviction and conversion of the careless, and the edification of his people. And it is the most important of all the means of grace; for it is the one which God hath intended especially to honour, and which he doth bless more than any other. This is taught by facts; and also by the Scriptures, in which we read, "How shall they hear without a preacher? Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God;" Rom. x. 14, 17. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" 1 Cor. i. 21.

The word of God ought not to be preached by every one; but only by such as are sufficiently gifted, and also duly approved, and called to this office." Reason teaches that a man ought to be qualified for any work which he undertakes, and therefore especially for the work of the ministry, which is peculiarly important. And the Scriptures teach that a gospel minister, should be blameless, an able man, and apt to teach.

To be duly qualified for this work, piety is an essen-

tial requisite, and one of the first importance. But not every good man, nor even every eminently pious man, is fit to preach the word. A gospel minister ought also to have natural gifts, and a mind stored with such knowledge as will enable him to explain and apply the Scriptures aright.

Whether a man possesses the requisite qualifications ought to be determined by others, qualified to judge. To allow a man to determine this matter himself alone, would be to open the door, to introduce to the ministry, the weakest, most self-sufficient, and enthusiastic men. His qualifications ought to be judged of by others; and he ought to be approved, set apart, and ordained to this office, by those who are themselves ministers of the Gospel. Of this we have frequent examples in the New Testament, and thus was Timothy introduced to the sacred office.

While some are not qualified for this office, and therefore ought to be discouraged, and if possible, prevented from entering it, if they seek it; others who are qualified and approved, are under the most solemn obligations to devote themselves to the Lord in this work. This we are taught, by the most solemn charge given to Timothy in our text. A charge sufficient to arouse young men, of approved piety and talents, to seek to be fitted for this office, and to enter upon it.

"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom, preach the word."

We learn from our text *what* ministers ought to preach, viz. "the word;" and *how* they ought to preach. They ought to "be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine." And we learn also, *why* they ought thus to preach the word.—"I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom." My object in the ensuing discourse is,

I. To show what ministers ought to preach.

II. How they ought to preach.

I. I am to show *what* ministers ought to preach. Our text teaches us they ought to preach the *word*. "Preach the word;" that is the word of God as contained in the

Scriptures of truth. The object of this word is, to teach men the way of salvation through Christ. Christ, and salvation through him are the sum and substance of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments. They all have in some way or other a bearing on this point.—Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the Bible. Christ and salvation through him ought therefore to be the theme of ministers, in their preaching. Do they preach the deplorable state of man? It ought to be to show the necessity of a Saviour .Do they hold up the terrors of the law, the wrath of God and the torment of the wicked? The object ought to be to drive them to Christ for safety, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Do they preach pardon of sin and acceptance with God? These ought to be preached through faith in Christ, and as granted to the sinner for his sake. Do they preach morality and holiness of life? These ought to be preached as flowing from a new heart, given to us by the Spirit of Christ in consequence of his death. And so of other subjects. Every sermon ought to have a bearing upon Christ and him crucified, or to grow out of this subject. And sermons which stand disconnected from this subject are not gospel sermons; and ministers who have nothing of Christ in their sermons violate their commission and can do no good; but do much harm to their people. Such are those moral essays, which are sometimes pronounced from the sacred desk, which have nothing more of the gospel of Christ in them, than are to be found in the writings of Cicero or Seneca, or any other of the Heathen moralists.

What does the Bible teach on this subject? "Preach the word," the revealed word of God. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel;" Mark xvi. 15. And what is the gospel, but the glad tidings of salvation through Jesus Christ? And what was the conduct of Paul and his fellow labourers? Hear it from his own declarations; "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;" 2 Cor. iv. 5. "Christ sent me to preach the gospel. We preach Christ crucified;" 1 Cor. i. 17, 23. "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" 1 Cor. ii. 2. From these texts we clearly see what a minister ought to preach. Christ and his cross should be all his theme.

Christ and his cross, the foundation of a sinner's pardon, acceptance, sanctification, holy obedience, perseverance, consolation, and eternal life; and his condemnation too if he continues a stranger to him.

We proceed,

II. To show *how* ministers ought to preach. We have the manner in which the gospel ought to be preached, as taught in the Scriptures, excellently expressed in our Larger Catechism in the answer to the question,

"How is the word of God to be preached by those that are called thereunto?

They that are called to labour in the ministry of the word are to preach sound doctrine; diligently, in season, and out of season; plainly, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; faithfully, making known the whole counsel of God; wisely applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers; zealously, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people; sincerely, aiming at his glory, and their conversion, edification and salvation."

In showing the manner in which ministers ought to preach the gospel, I shall take this answer as my guide.

1. Ministers should preach the gospel "*diligently*, in season, and out of season." Slothfulness in any lawful calling is a crime, and is condemned in the word of God, in which we are exhorted to be, "Not slothful in business;" Rom. xii. 11. More especially therefore, must slothfulness be criminal in a gospel minister, as the business in which he is engaged is more important than any other. Besides, that a minister ought to be diligent in preaching the gospel is proved from the exhortations which Paul gave to Timothy, and from the examples of Christ and his apostles. Paul exhorted Timothy to give himself wholly to the work; and to be instant, in season, and out of season. Our Saviour was indefatigable in preaching the gospel; not only on the Sabbath, but also on other days; and not only in the temple and synagogues but in all places, where opportunity offered. Paul's life abundantly shows that he was diligent in preaching the gospel. Of Apollos it is recorded, "He spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord;" Acts xviii. 25. And the apostles collectively resolved, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the

word ;" Acts vi. 4. Hence it is evident that a minister ought to be diligent in preaching the gospel ; and that it is his duty to preach, not only in season, or on the Sabbath ; but also out of season, or out of the ordinary times, and on other days of the week besides the Sabbath. And a minister ought to delight in being thus diligent in his work ; and he ought never to esteem his labour, in the work of the ministry, a drudgery, but a pleasure. He ought with delight to be willing to spend and be spent in this important and glorious service. And the man, who has not this spirit, had better be engaged in any other business, than that of the gospel ministry.

2. Ministers of the gospel ought to preach the word "*plainly*, not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." Paul told the Corinthians, "In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice, I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue :" 1 Cor. xiv. 19. "We use great plainness of speech ;" 2 Cor. iii. 12. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power ;" 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4.

Paul was abundantly competent to address his hearers in a learned and high style, or in the enticing words of man's wisdom ; but he carefully avoided it, and spake with great plainness, and in such a manner as the Spirit of God usually accompanies with his powerful influences, convincing, converting, and comforting the soul. And it is the duty of ministers now, to address their audiences in the same manner. The object of a minister ought to be, not to gain the admiration of his hearers, for his rhetorical flourishes and display of learning ; but to do their souls good ; and therefore he ought to speak with great plainness. For he must be understood by his hearers to do them any good ; but it is certain, that a large portion of most if not all congregations are unlearned, and cannot understand any other than plain language. Such persons, when the preacher makes a display of learning in his sermons, must remain entirely unprofited, though their souls are valuable, as the souls of those who are learned.

This want of plainness of style, so as to be understood by all their hearers, is a great fault, sometimes, in preachers, and argues either a great want of acquaintance with the mass of the people who compose congregations; or a criminal desire of gaining applause to themselves, instead of instructing their hearers, and glorifying Christ. Preaching in an unknown tongue would be as likely to do good as such preaching. And here I would observe that by plainness is, by no means, meant, a vulgar style of preaching: but such a simplicity, as is perfectly consistent with purity and even elegance of style. These are entirely compatible with each other, as we may learn from the manner in which Christ and his apostles preached.

3. Ministers ought to preach the word "*faithfully* making known the whole counsel of God." The Lord gave to Ezekiel a solemn charge on this subject; and through him every minister of the word of God is addressed, in the same solemn language. "O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand;" Ezek. xxxiii 7, 8. To Jeremiah the Lord gave charge, "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully;" Jer. xxiii. 28. And that great pattern for a gospel minister, the apostle Paul, said to the Corinthians, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful;" 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2. When taking his leave of the Ephesians, after labouring among them for some time he appealed to them saying; "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God;" Acts xx. 20, 26, 27. And he exhorted Timothy in our text, "Reprove, rebuke."

Ministers have immortal souls committed to their care, therefore faithfulness becomes them, lest these souls should perish. If ministers will be faithful, they must prudently declare the whole counsel of God. They must not refrain from reproving vice or from preaching cer-

tain truths, because they may be disliked by some persons from whom they are likely to receive temporal advantage, if they please them; and whose opposition may give them trouble if they displease them. Such conduct is an attempt to please men rather than God. Ministers have strong temptations to withhold unpalatable truths; because the people often desire to have smooth things prophesied to them, and to be permitted to live in ease, and not have their consciences awakened to disturb them. But wo to that people who has a minister, who will follow their desires, when they wish him to prophesy smooth things to them. Under his preaching, they will most probably continue secure, until they drop into the bottomless pit. And wo to that minister who is deterred from faithfulness by a desire to please his people. If they should perish, their blood will be required at his hand.

4. Ministers ought to preach the word "*wisely*, applying themselves to the necessities and capacities of the hearers." Paul exhorted Timothy "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth;" 2 Tim. ii. 15. And writing to the Corinthians he said, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able;" 1 Cor. iii. 2. And to the Colossians he wrote "Whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom;" Col. i. 28.

This wisdom consists in selecting in the general course of preaching, those subjects which are most important, and best calculated to promote the good of a people, and dwelling most frequently on these subjects, and but occasionally on others, which, though the truth of God, are of less importance. It consists further in endeavouring to adapt discourses to times and seasons, and to the state of a congregation in general, and to every class of persons in particular, so as to give to every one his portion in due season. There are particular times and seasons, which may be improved with great advantage; as for instance the beginning of the year; a time of great plenty, or of great scarcity; a time of great sickness and mortality, and the like. A minister who preaches wisely, will lay hold of such seasons and improve them. Further when any particular vice prevails greatly in a congregation, a wise

minister will frequently call the attention of his congregation to this subject, and endeavour to effect a reformation. When professors of religion are backsliding, and becoming lukewarm, he ought to dwell much upon the evils of such a state. When a congregation is in general careless, his sermons ought to be such as are best calculated to awaken the secure. And when there are many inquiring, he ought to dwell on subjects, calculated to lead them to Christ. Thus if he acts wisely, he will adapt his subjects generally, to the general state of his congregation. Besides, as there always are different classes and characters in a congregation, some careless, some inquiring, some backsliding, some weak in the faith, some strong, some wavering, some tempted, some afflicted, and some in other circumstances, it becomes a minister to endeavour to give to each of these his portion in due season. And hence we may infer, that a minister should be as much as practicable, consistently with other duties, among his people, that he may become acquainted with their state, and know how to adapt his discourses to their respective necessities.

5. Ministers ought to preach the word "*zealously*, with fervent love to God, and the souls of his people." Of Apollos it is recorded, "being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord;" Acts xviii. 25. And Paul and his fellow labourers were so zealous in this work, that they were charged with being beside themselves; to which charge Paul replied, "Whether we be beside ourselves it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us;" 2 Cor. v. 13, 14. And in the same epistle he wrote, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved;" 2 Cor. xii. 15. Ministers ought to be so filled with love to God and the souls of men, as to engage with their whole hearts in the work of the ministry, and to show to the world that they are indeed in earnest. The subjects on which a minister addresses his people or ought to address them, are so vastly important, that as one expresses himself "Passion is reason here." And the man who can go into the pulpit, and speak on the amazing plan of redemption, and the love of Christ therein manifested, and on the infinitely important concerns of eternity, in a cold,

and unfeeling manner; and the man who does not manifest, by his diligence, his watching for souls, and his unwearied zeal in the work of the ministry; who does not in short feel, and manifest that he feels willing to spend and be spent in this important and glorious work, is not fit to be a minister of the gospel.

6. Ministers ought to preach the word "*sincerely*, aiming at the glory of God, and the conversion, edification, and salvation of their hearers." They ought sincerely to believe the truths which they preach to others, and to have a realizing sense of their importance. "We are not (said Paul to the Corinthians) as many which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ;" 2 Cor. ii. 17. We "have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, not handling the word of God deceitfully, but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God;" 2 Cor. iv. 2. We have reason to believe there have been those, invested with the office of the sacred ministry, who have really disbelieved the truths which they have preached to others. Surely Tophet is ordained of old for such ministers. We have reason to believe also that some bear the name of ministers, who have no realizing sense of the importance of the truths which they deliver. The state of such ministers must be dreadful beyond description. The glory of God and the salvation of souls are to be the great ends of a gospel minister; and these are the ends, which he should earnestly endeavour to promote. To this purpose Paul spake when he said, "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know; nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness. Nor of men sought we glory;" 1 Thes. ii. 4, 5, 6. "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more;" 1 Cor. ix. 19. "We do all things for your edifying;" 2 Cor. xii. 19. Thus Paul and the primitive ministers preached. Their object was to glorify God, and save the souls of men. And this has been in all ages, and still is, the object of every minister, whom God approves. The esteem of men, a livelihood, and the advancement

of temporal interest, we have reason to fear, sometimes operate as motives to influence men to seek the gospel ministry, and govern them in their preaching and conduct, when they have obtained this office; but the faithful minister will sincerely and supremely aim at promoting the glory of him who called him; and the conversion, edification, and salvation of those committed to his charge.

A solemn consideration which ought to influence every minister most carefully to preach the word, and nothing but the word of God, and to preach it in the manner directed in the Scriptures, we have contained in our text; "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and kingdom." Ministers are acting in the presence of God, whose ambassadors they profess to be, and of the divine Saviour who died to purchase the salvation which they are sent forth to proclaim; and a day of judgment is approaching when the souls committed to their care must stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and be welcomed to everlasting glory, or be banished to endless misery, according as they have received or not, the salvation of Christ. What a solemn motive to influence ministers to be faithful! The souls to whom they preach must soon stand in judgment, and enter upon an eternal state. How contemptible ought all time-serving, and want of faithfulness, to appear in view of the judgment bar. If ministers have any regard to the souls of their people, this motive ought to have a solemn influence to lead them to do their duty according to the word of God.

Besides ministers themselves must soon stand in judgment, and give an account of their faithfulness. And the Lord has declared, that if any perish through their neglect or unfaithfulness, their blood he will require at the watchmen's hands. Awful declaration! Sufficient to make those who have entered, or who may be seeking this office, to tremble, and shrink back from the work. But if we are called to it, there is a necessity laid upon us to preach the gospel, and wo be to us, if we preach not the gospel. Brethren, pray for you minister, that he may be faithful, and clear his soul from the guilt of your blood.—Amen.

SERMON XCV.

HEARING THE WORD.

LUKE VIII. 18. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*Take heed therefore how ye hear.*"

Our Saviour had described in the parable of the sower, the different kinds of hearers, which are found in religious assemblies, where the word is preached; and the effects which the word produced upon them. Hence he took occasion to give the exhortation contained in our text: "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

We have in former discourses, attended to the manner in which the word of God ought to be read and preached; we come now in course to consider how it ought to be *heard* when preached. Our duty in this respect, we have pointed out in the answer to the 90th question of our Catechism.

"*How is the word to be read and heard that it may become effectual unto salvation?*

That the word may become effectual unto salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer, receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives."

Our text evidently implies that it is our duty to hear the word or wait upon the preaching of it. And that this is the duty of all who can have access to the word preached, is evident from other passages of Scripture, such as the exhortation, "Not forsaking the assembling ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" Heb. x. 25; and the command to ministers to "Preach the gospel to every creature;" Mark xvi. 15; which undoubtedly implies the duty of every one to hear it; and also from the numerous examples, of attendance upon the preaching of the word which we find in Scripture, and the happy effects which result from the word preached.

But it is a lamentable truth that many who live where

the word of God is preached, seldom or never hear it. They forsake the assembling of themselves together. Most certainly such are exceedingly guilty, and unless they repent and change their conduct, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, and Tyre and Sidon, in the day of judgment, than for them.

But our business at this time is not so much with these persons, who neglect attendance upon the preaching of the word, as with those who do externally wait upon it. Many such receive no saving benefit. And, even among those, who, we have reason to believe, are the people of God, many, at times, appear to bring forth little or no fruit. Corrupt nature will be ready to frame excuses for this unprofitable hearing of the word; but the real reason is, that these hearers do not wait upon the word preached in a proper manner. They do not sufficiently take heed how they hear.

If we would profit by the word preached we ought,

1. To attend to it with *diligence*. This diligence implies a frequent hearing of the word preached; or embracing every opportunity to hear it that can be done consistently with other duties, both in season, and out of season, or statedly and occasionally; and not suffer trifles, as many do, to keep us away from the house of God.

When we are sitting under the sound of the preached gospel, we ought to give a diligent attention to the word delivered. Thus our Saviour, when he began his sermon concerning the sower, called upon his hearers to "hearken," or give a diligent attention. And several times he gave the exhortation, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear." So also Paul when he was about to address an assembly of people, exhorted them to give a strict attention. "Men of Israel, and ye that fear God give audience;" Acts xiii. 16. It is for want of a due attention, while waiting on the preaching of the word, that so many receive so little profit from it. Without attention it is impossible that the word should profit us. And this attention should be uninterrupted; for by losing a part we frequently lose the sense of the whole; and unless we understand what we hear we cannot be profited. To this diligent attention to the word while it is preached, stands opposed every thing which has a tendency to divert the attention. Wandering thoughts ought to be carefully guarded a-

gainst ; and our hearts ought to be fixed, and intent upon the word which we are hearing : Hence I would observe that late attendance, unnecessarily leaving the house of God, before the conclusion of worship, drowsiness, sleeping, smiling, whispering, and the like are highly improper ; as the person, who is guilty of any of these actions, cannot give that attention to the word which he ought, and generally he disturbs others and distracts their attention, as well as his own.

They who come late into the house of God, must lose all the benefit which might be derived from the exercises attended to before they appear. And almost certainly they disturb the devotions, and distract the attention of others ; which is a serious consideration. I know that persons may sometimes be necessarily detained until after the service has commenced. But it is not at all probable that necessity can be plead in behalf of those, who are habitually late in their attendance ; nor is it probable that those who feel so little interested in the exercises of the sanctuary, as to be willing, unnecessarily, to lose a part, can have that temper, which will fit them to derive profit from the word, when they do come. Neither is it to be expected that those who stand about the doors of the house of worship, conversing on worldly subjects, or who unnecessarily delay, and are not present to unite in asking a blessing on the exercises of the day, will receive the blessing about which they manifest so much indifference. Brethren, I confidently assert it ; no person who feels as he ought to feel, will be willingly absent, at the commencement of the public worship of God's house.

Those again who unnecessarily leave the house of God, before the conclusion of the religious exercises, most assuredly do not hear the word with diligence, and cannot be supposed to have received any profit. Those who unnecessarily go away before the blessing is pronounced, as well as those who come after it is asked, we have every reason to believe, receive no profit. Besides they disturb others, and interrupt their attention which is a very serious evil.

Again, all whispering, smiling, and light gestures, are inconsistent with a diligent hearing of the word. Persons who act thus, certainly, cannot have that reverence for God and his truth, which is indispensable to a profitable

hearing of the word preached. Nor can their attention be fixed while they act in such a way. Yea, persons who act thus, not only, receive no good, but greatly provoke God, who "Is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him:" Ps. lxxxix. 7. And who has said "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified;" Lev. x. 3. Besides the evil extends further. Persons guilty of such conduct, injure others, as well as themselves, by diverting their attention, and distracting their minds, and thus hindering the good which they might otherwise receive.

Another practice, which is inconsistent with a diligent attention to the word preached is, sleeping under the preaching of the word. Such persons certainly cannot be profited. This can need no proof. A minister might as well preach to the seats in which they sit, as to them. Besides, they not only receive no benefit themselves; but they also injure others, by distracting their attention. And if those who indulge in this practice be persons to whom others look up for example, as is sometimes the case, their example, becomes peculiarly pernicious, as it must vilify the ordinance of preaching in the estimation of others, and they probably will take a license from it to do the same. Besides this practice of sleeping under the preaching of the word has a direct tendency to abate the ardour and zeal of a minister, and to discourage him, both in his preparations, and his delivery; and it is calculated to injure his feelings as a man, and much more as a minister of Christ; and it is certainly a great indignity offered to God.

Let those addicted to this practice, be exhorted, to watch and war, and pray against this sin. Let them hearken to our text, "Take heed, therefore how ye hear." If they obey this injunction of him who will shortly be their judge, they will no more sleep under the preaching of his word.

2. If we would take heed how we hear, and profit by the word preached we ought to *prepare* ourselves for attending upon it. We ought seasonably to lay aside worldly business, and exclude from our minds worldly thoughts. If thoughts of the world, its business, riches, honours, or pleasures, occupy our minds, when we go into the house

of God, we cannot reasonably expect to derive profit from the word preached. Such thoughts will either entirely exclude the word, or else choke it and render it unfruitful. And this is one great reason why the word is so often unfruitful in those who appear in the house of God. They have not endeavoured to banish worldly thoughts from their minds; but have brought them with them to the place of worship; and while the word is sounding in their ears, their thoughts like the fool's eyes are in the ends of the earth, intent upon their farms, their merchandize, or other means of gain, their sinful pleasures, and their schemes of ambition, for the attainment of worldly honour.

It therefore becomes us to abstract ourselves from the world; and this is not the work of a moment, but requires time. And here I would observe, that it would be an excellent custom, to have worldly business seasonably out of the way on Saturday evening, that we might begin to prepare for the Sabbath before it arrives.

Again, we ought to endeavour, previously to hearing the word, not only to have our minds abstracted from the world, but to have them impressed with a reverential fear of that God into whose presence we are about to go, and with a sense of the importance of profiting under the word which we are about to hear. God is a being of infinite majesty, and of spotless purity. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, and requireth that those who worship him, should worship him in spirit and truth. He is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. He is fearful in praises and has declared he will be sanctified in all them that come nigh unto him. The word which we are about to hear, when we are going to the house of God, is the word of this God, in which we are most deeply interested; and which will be either a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. With these solemn truths we ought to labour to have our minds impressed. We ought also to endeavour to have a sense of our necessities, and of the fulness and excellency of the blessings which God dispenses in his house, that we may come feeling our emptiness, and hungering and thirsting after the bread of life. If we were to come with such a preparation, we have every

reason to believe we would not generally go away so barren as we do.

3. We ought to hear the word with *prayer*. We ought to look to God for his blessing before we come, while we are hearing, and after we have heard. Paul will plant and Apollos water in vain, until the Lord gives the increase. And the constitution which he has established is, "Ask and it shall be given you—every one that asketh receiveth;" Mat. vii. 7, 8. "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them;" Ezek. xxxvi. 37. If therefore we would profit by the word preached, it becomes us to be fervent in prayer for the divine blessing. We ought to go to the house of God after having sought his blessing. And doubtless one great reason why many profit so little, under the preaching of the word is, they do not pray for the divine blessing. As the apostle James said, "Ye have not, because ye ask not;" Jam. iv. 2. Or they do not pray aright, as James said again, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss;" Jam. iv. 3. Before you come to the house of God, you ought to implore the divine blessing, on the word and ordinances of God. You ought to pray for your minister, that the Lord would be with him, help him to speak in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, and divide to every one their portion in due season, and especially enable him to speak a word in season and with power to your soul. The apostle Paul exhorted most of the churches to which he wrote, "Brethren pray for me—pray for us." The prayers of faith offered up for the ministers of God, are oftentimes answered by blessings upon the offerer. You ought to pray also for the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon his church, and particularly that part of it, in which your lot is cast. If you have that disposition which you ought to have to profit by the word, you will desire the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, and the saving good of others. "Pray (said the Psalmist) for the peace of Jerusalem they shall prosper that love thee;" Ps. cxxii. 6. If your petitions be answered, and the Lord build up Zion, you yourselves may expect to receive a share of the blessing. And you ought especially to pray each one for yourself, that the Lord would grant his blessing, and give you the composed mind, and the hearing ear; and that he would enable you to understand and apply what you hear, and bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

While you are hearing the word it would be profitable, frequently to put up short ejaculations for the divine blessing. And after you have heard the word, prayer is still a duty. If you would profit, follow what you have heard, with prayer to God, that he would seal instruction upon your heart, preserve the seed of the word by his Spirit, and make it fruitful.

4. If we would profit under the preaching of the word, we must receive it with *faith*. It was for want of this that the Israelites of whom the Apostle spake did not profit.—"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it;" Heb. iv. 2. If the word is not believed, in vain is it preached to us.—We ought to believe it to be the word of God, if it be according to the Scriptures of truth. As the Bereans did, try what you hear by this rule. And when the word of God, according to the Scriptures is preached, hear it with faith, assenting to its truth, and with a realizing sense of its importance as the word of God, and with a determination implicitly to follow the truth of God.

5. Receive the word not only with faith, but also with *love*. A want of love to the truth was one reason why some concerning whom the Apostle wrote failed of salvation. "They receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved;" 2 Thes. ii. 10. Some hearers hate the truth, cannot bear to hear it, and dislike the preacher for uttering it. Thus Ahab said respecting Micaiah, who was a faithful prophet of the Lord and told the king the truth, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil;" 1 Kings xxii. 8. In like manner the Jews were frequently offended with the prophets, and our Saviour, and his Apostles, for telling them the truth; and this anger effectually prevented profit from the word. For instead of hating their sins and crucifying them, as they ought to have done, they hated and persecuted the preachers, who doubtless had the purest benevolence in their hearts towards them. Unless ministers speak the truth of God, they cannot reasonably have any prospect of success. And the truth generally must condemn a portion of the hearers. If therefore those who hear the word would profit by it, it becomes them as James directs, to "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word;" Jam. i. 21.

It becomes them to love the truth, however it may condemn them, and whatever self-denial and sacrifice of selfish inclinations it may require. When the truth condemns them, they ought to condemn themselves, and change their conduct instead of cavil with the truth and condemn the preacher, who out of love to their souls faithfully delivers to them the truth of God.

6. If we would profit by the preaching of the word, we ought to *lay up* what we hear in our hearts. "Thy word (said David) have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee;" Ps. cxix. 11. We should labour to treasure up what we hear in our memories; for unless we remember what we hear, we can receive but little permanent advantage from the word; our feelings may be excited, but unless we remember what we hear we lay up nothing for future use. And that we may lay up what we hear in our hearts, and preserve it there, we ought most carefully to avoid every thing, which may have a tendency to take away the word, and destroy the impressions which have been made. Hence vain company, or any company whose conversation does not savour of religion, ought to be avoided as much as possible when we come from the house of God. Hence also, all vain conversation, or even talking about our worldly business, ought to be avoided, when we are coming out of the house God, or have returned from hearing the word. The seed of the word is very easily rooted out. The evil one, as represented in the parable of the sower, ever stands ready to pluck it out of our hearts, lest it should produce a saving effect. And doubtless the word is often rendered unfruitful, before the hearers have left the place of worship by engaging in worldly conversation.

7. Lastly. If we would profitably hear the word preached, we must reduce what we hear to *practice*. Practice is the great end of all preaching. We ought therefore to hear the word with a view to practice. Should you follow all the other directions and not this, you would fail to derive spiritual profit from the word preached. Accordingly our Saviour hath told us, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house: and it fell not for it was

founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it;" Mat. vii. 24—27.

Thus, my brethren, I have pointed out to you, how you ought to hear the word, when it is preached, if you would profit by it.

In the conclusion of this discourse, let me urge upon you to take heed how you hear. Remember that this is the command of the Saviour who died for sinners, and will shortly be your judge. Remember that the word which is preached, is that by which you will be tried in the great day of account; that which is able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ; that which is your eternal life; and that also which if not improved aright will be your eternal death. Every sermon which you hear delivered, agreeably to the word of God, if not heard aright, increases your condemnation. The word of God delivered by his faithful ambassadors, will not return unto him void, but will accomplish something. If it does not prove a savour of life, it will prove a savour of death unto death. If those who come to the house of God were duly impressed with these considerations, they could not rush thoughtlessly into the presence of God; they would ask his blessing before they came; they would be filled with reverence in his house; they would not indulge in light or trifling behaviour or sleep under the preaching of that word which will be life or death to their souls; and they would with eagerness, receive the word, pray over it, endeavour to remember it, and reduce it to practice.

May the Lord enable you my hearers, thus to take heed how you hear, that the word preached may prove an eternal benefit to your souls.—Amen.

SERMON XCVI.

THE SACRAMENTS.

ROMANS. IV, 11. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised.*"

The leading object of the Apostle, in this Epistle, was, to prove the great doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law. The Jews held to justification by works, and especially to the necessity of circumcision, and an observance of the ceremonial law. To show that this sentiment was erroneous, and at the same time to establish the doctrine of justification by faith, the Apostle, among other arguments, adduced the example of Abraham, of whom they boasted as their father; and proved from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that he was justified by faith as it was written, "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness:" Gen. xv. 6. The Apostle then asked the question, "How was it reckoned?" That is, the faith of Abraham for righteousness. When he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision?" This question he answered, "Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision;" verse 10. Abraham was not circumcised for many years, after it was said of him, "He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness." Circumcision therefore could have had no effect upon his justification; for he was justified before he was circumcised; and as stated in our text, "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised."

The object of selecting this text at this time is, to lead to an illustration of the three following questions in our Catechism, which come next in course to be considered, viz.

"*How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?*

What is a sacrament? and,

Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?"

Our text, it is true, does not, properly, include all these points; but it will lead to them as well, perhaps, as any single text we can find. Circumcision was a sacrament of the covenant of grace under the Old Testament dispensation, and we have in our text its nature pointed out, viz. a sign and seal of spiritual things. And the general nature of all the sacraments, both under the Old and the New Testament were the same. Therefore our text expresses the general nature of all the sacraments.

The first inquiry which claims our attention is,

I. "*What is a sacrament?*"

Our Catechism answers this question.

"*A sacrament is an holy ordinance, instituted by Christ; wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.*"

The word *sacrament* is not found in the Scriptures, but the things signified by this word are there contained; and the word was adopted by the primitive fathers to express these things. The word is borrowed from the Latin, and signifies the military oath in use among the ancient Romans, which they called *sacramentum*, by which soldiers bound themselves to be faithful to their general. As in those ordinances, which we call sacraments, there is a solemn engagement on the part of the receiver to be faithful to Christ. The word sacraments has been adopted, as expressive of these ordinances.

"*A sacrament is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ.*"

Christ was the *author* of the sacraments. Those of the New Testament were instituted, immediately by himself in person; and those of the Old Testament may also be said to have been instituted by him; for we have sufficient reason to believe that it was God the Son, who was with the Old Testament church, and so frequently appeared to the saints of that period, and gave to the church, the institutions, with which they were favoured.

A sacrament is a *positive institution*, the obligation to observe which, arises not from the nature and fitness of things, but solely from the command of the Institutor.—If Christ had not instituted the Sacraments, they would not be binding, and whenever he pleases to repeal them the obligation to their observance ceases.

As to the *nature* of a sacrament, it is that, "Wherein by sensible signs, Christ and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." Hence the parts of a sacrament are two, the outward and sensible signs, and the things signified by those signs.

In a sacrament, there are *outward and sensible signs.* Thus in circumcision, there was the cutting off the flesh of the foreskin; in the passover, there was the slaying of the lamb, the sprinkling of the blood, and the eating of the lamb with unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, and in haste, with their staves in their hands, and their shoes on their feet; in baptism there is the application of water to the subject; and in the Lord's supper, there is the breaking and eating of bread, and the drinking of wine. These are all external signs, presented to the senses, and intended to affect them, and through them to affect the soul.—This is a method of instruction, which God has always taken with his church, and which is well suited to our present state, in which we are naturally more affected by things that strike our senses, than by spiritual ideas, presented without these helps.

But in the sacraments we are to look further than merely to the external elements and actions. These are signs; but there is always something of a spiritual nature *signified* by them. They signify and represent Christ and the blessings of the covenant of grace. Thus in circumcision the sign represented, that the subject deserved to be cut off from the favour of God, and signified that without shedding of blood there was no remission, and pointed to the blood of Christ, which was to be shed to take away sin. In the passover, the lamb slain signified the Lamb of God to be slain to take away sin; the sprinkling of the blood, the application of his blood to the soul for the pardon of sin; and the eating of the lamb, the necessity of depending on Christ for the support of spiritual life. In baptism, the application of water signifies that the subject is guilty and polluted, and represents the pardon of sin through the blood of Christ, and the regeneration and sanctification of the soul by his Spirit. And in the Lord's Supper, the bread represents the body of Christ broken for us, and the wine his blood shed for us.

In a sacrament the sign and the thing signified, are to

be kept *distinct*, and not to be confounded. This has not always been done. The sign and the thing signified have been confounded, and this confusion has been productive of very dangerous errors. Thus baptism has been called regeneration, and persons have supposed themselves really regenerated, and in a state of safety, because they had been baptized.

In the Lord's Supper also the sign has been made the thing signified. Thus the bread after consecration, has been held to be, not a sign of the body of Christ, but the real body itself, and the wine his real blood. This is called the doctrine of transubstantiation, the truth of which was once generally believed, and scarcely called in question in the world. A doctrine most absurd, violating every dictate of common sense, and which before this audience can need no refutation. The true nature of a sacrament is, by external signs to represent spiritual things: and we ought carefully to avoid confounding the one with the other.

A sacrament is represented in the answer which we are considering, as a *seal* also as well as a sign; and thus is circumcision represented in our text; "He received the sign of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had." A sacrament is a seal of the covenant of grace. A seal is a standing evidence of the reality of a covenant; and it binds the parties to fulfil the articles thereof. So the sacraments are standing evidences of the reality of the covenant of grace; and they not only signify the blessings of this covenant; but they seal the articles, and mutually bind the parties to the performance thereof, on the conditions stated in the covenant. The sacraments are seals, both on the part of God and the receiver. The Lord graciously condescends not only to promise to the believing receiver, but to confirm this promise with the sacraments as seals, that he will bestow upon him, the blessings of the new covenant signified by these signs. And the receiver obligates himself by the sacraments as seals, that he will be the Lord's and his alone, and that he will faithfully endeavour to perform all the duties required of him in the covenant.

The *persons* to whom the sacraments represent, seal, and apply Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant as stated in the answer which we are considering are believ-

ers. With respect to adults, the seals of the covenant belong to believers alone, and to none but believers. To those who receive these signs by faith, are the things signified, sealed and applied. And upon none but those who do believe, does God bind himself to bestow the blessings of the new covenant. With respect to all others, they are condemned already; and "Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth;" Ps. L. 16.

These remarks apply to adults. There was a sacrament under the Old Testament, which was applied to infants; and we hold there is one under the New. With respect to infants, they cannot exercise faith; but still there ought to be faith in the offerer; and the ordinance which is applied to infants, belongs in the sight of the church to the seed of the visibly faithful.

We proceed to inquire,

II. "*Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?*

The sacraments of the New Testament are baptism and the Lord's Supper."

Under the Old Testament, there were *two* sacraments, which were signs and seals of the covenant of grace, viz. *circumcision* and the *passover*. These by the coming of Christ were done away. Their abrogation at his coming, was implied in their very nature. For being by the shedding of blood, typical of Christ and the shedding of his blood, it was proper when he came and shed his blood, that the seals should be changed, and that others more suited to the New Testament dispensation should be substituted in their room. That the sacraments of the Old Testament have ceased to be obligatory on the church, is evident from the Scriptures of the New Testament. *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* have come in the room of them and signify the same things as far as consists with the difference of dispensation.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, were instituted by Christ himself, while he was upon earth. These sacraments are still in force. This has been denied by some, who exclude every thing external from the gospel dispensation. But it is certain, Christ instituted these ordinances, and that they were observed by the Apostles and disciples after his death, and by the primitive church. and by the church in all ages since, down to

the present time. Besides, there was as much need of these ordinances in future generations, as in the apostolic age, and we no where find them abrogated by divine authority; and no one but he who instituted them has a right to abrogate them. Further, that baptism was to continue a sacrament in the christian church to the end of the world, appears from the commission which our Saviour gave to his apostles after his resurrection, and the promise which he annexed. "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world;" Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. The promise here made was intended to strengthen the apostles and their successors, in the performance of the duties just assigned them; and as the promise extended to the end of the world, the conclusion is obvious, that the commission to preach and baptize was to continue as long. And that the Lord's Supper was to be a standing ordinance in the church is evident from the words of institution as given us by Paul: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come;" 1 Cor. xi. 26. Whence we learn that in this ordinance, the disciples of Christ were to show forth his death until the end of the world, when he was to come the second time.

And as there are two sacraments in the christian church, which are to continue in it till the end of the world, so we believe there are but two. In opposition to this belief the Roman Catholics hold to seven, viz. besides baptism and the Lord's Supper; confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction. On the last five I would only observe, that no divine warrant can be produced for their institution as sacraments; and without this we have no right to consider them as such; and they all want some, if not all of the things essential to a sacrament.

We proceed to consider the

III. Point proposed, viz.

"*How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?*

The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer

them ; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit, in them that by faith receive them."

The sacraments are important means of salvation. The Apostle taught that circumcision profited much every way ; and the same may doubtless be said of baptism, which has come in its room. And many a believer has borne, and can bear testimony to the inestimable spiritual benefits, which they have derived from the Lord's Supper. But the sacraments do not become effectual means of salvation from *any virtue in themselves.* We have however reason to fear, there are many persons who suppose there is some intrinsic virtue in the elements themselves ; and that they operate as spells or charms to communicate salvation. Hence, looking no further than the simple elements themselves, and destitute of faith, they suppose that if they can get their children baptized, they will be safe, or if they can get baptized themselves, and be admitted to the Lord's Supper, all will be well. This is a most dangerous, though we have reason to believe, not an uncommon error. There is no intrinsic virtue in the sacraments themselves ; for many receive them who still continue strangers to spiritual blessings. An instance directly in point we have in Simon Magus ; for after he had been baptized, " Peter said unto him, Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter ; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity ;" Acts viii. 20, 21, 23. And Paul has taught us that a man may partake of the Lord's Supper, and instead of being saved by it, " be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," and " eat and drink damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body ;" 1 Cor. xi. 27, 29. And we frequently see many who have been baptized, and some who have been at the Lord's Supper, whose whole lives prove that they are not in a state of salvation, and that they have received no benefit from these ordinances. Hence it is evident, there is no saving benefit in the ordinances themselves.

Neither do the sacraments become effectual from *any virtue in him that doth administer them.* Or, as it is expressed in our Larger Catechism, " by any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him, by whom they are administered." It does not depend upon the piety of a person who administers an ordinance, whether it shall

be efficacious or not. Although it be very desirable that none but truly pious men, should be in the gospel ministry, yet doubtless many have been in this office who were destitute of piety; and some such have without doubt been the instruments, in the hands of God, of saving good to others. For we have known ministers, who had many unequivocal seals to their ministry, and whose administrations of the sacraments were blessed, who, before the close of their lives, abundantly proved by their conduct, that they had never experimentally known that religion, which they preached to others. Besides, if piety in the person administering was necessary to the efficacy of a sacrament, the receiver must always be in suspense whether he had received, or could receive any benefit from an ordinance. For who can search the heart, and certainly know, whether the person from whom he receives the sacraments, be pious or not? These remarks must sufficiently show, that the piety of a minister is not necessary to the validity or efficacy of the ordinances which he administers. Besides, Paul has expressly informed us that the efficacy of ordinances does not depend on ministers; "Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase;" 1 Cor. iii. 7. And as the efficacy of the sacraments, does not depend upon the piety, so neither does it upon the intention of him who administers them, as the Papists erroneously hold. For if it did, the minister would be something, and almost every thing in the efficacy of an ordinance, contrary to the text just quoted. The same reasons which have just been given to show, that the efficacy of a sacrament does not depend upon the piety of him who administers it, also prove that it cannot depend upon his intention.

The efficacy of the sacraments depend on "*the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit, in them that by faith receive them.*" Christ has put his blessing upon these ordinances of his own institution, and the Holy Spirit uses them as means of grace, and applies them as he does the word, rendering them effectual to the spiritual good of those who receive them aright. These are they who receive them in faith. Unless we exercise faith in sacraments they will be unavailing. This remark, by no means operates against infant baptism; for in the administration

of this ordinance to infants, we hold to the necessity of faith in the offerer or representative of the child, to render the act acceptable in the sight of God, and have ground for hope of a divine blessing upon the ordinance.

Thus brethren, I have taken a general view of the sacraments. In succeeding discourses, I shall endeavour to treat of each of the sacraments of the New Testament particularly.

We have seen that there are but two sacraments in the christian church. Those therefore who would make and observe more, are guilty of will-worship, which the Lord condemns and abhors. We have seen also that these two sacraments were instituted by Christ, who is King in Zion, and that they are still in force; it is therefore our duty in a right manner to observe them. This duty is enforced by the authority, and by the love of Christ; and they are criminal in the sight of God, who neglect these sacraments, or either of them. We have seen the nature of the sacraments, that their object is to signify and seal spiritual things by external signs. Let us be careful and not confound the signs, and the things signified. Let us not lay a stress upon receiving the outward elements to the neglect of the things signified. Those only who use them in faith use them aright and profitably. Let us then approach them in the exercise of faith, and look by faith through the external signs to the things signified. Let us realize the condescension and goodness of God in sealing blessings to us in these ordinances; let us realize also the obligations which, by coming to these ordinances, we seal and irrevocably bind ourselves to perform. And let us ever receive the sacraments, depending on the blessing of Christ and the working of his Spirit to render them effectual.—Amen.

SERMON XCVII.

BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

"*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

This is the commission which our Lord gave to his apostles, and through them to the ministers of the gospel in every age, after he had risen from the dead, and just before he ascended to his glory. He had now finished the work, for which he came into the world, and had fully brought to an end the Old Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace, which looked forward to him as to come. A new dispensation was now to be introduced, in which Christ was to be considered, and received, as already come. To introduce this new dispensation, the apostles were now commissioned and sent forth. Those who received this new dispensation were now to constitute the true church; and the ordinance of admission to a visible standing in the church, was now to be baptism, which took the place of circumcision.

The apostles were commissioned to go to all nations. Heretofore the church had been confined to the Jews; but now the Gentiles were to be brought in. The apostles were first to teach or disciple those to whom they went; or to instruct them in the nature of the gospel dispensation of the grace of God, and induce them to embrace it; and on their embracing it, they were to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and thus introduce them to a visible standing in the church of Christ.

Our text will lead us to treat of the subject of *baptism*. On the last Sabbath morning we attended to an illustration of the sacraments generally. The way is now prepared to treat of each of the sacraments in particular.

Baptism comes first in order. In our Catechism, the doctrine is stated as follows in the answer to the 94th question.

"*What is baptism?*

Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's."

On the subject of baptism, some controverted points will necessarily claim our attention, which I shall endeavour to handle with meekness, and candour, and in the spirit of christian charity towards those, who may differ from me in sentiment.

The object in this discourse is,

I. To explain the nature of baptism.

II. To consider the proper mode of applying water in the ordinance.

I. Let us attend to a few remarks on the *nature* of baptism.

Baptism is a *sacrament*. As such, its general nature has already been illustrated under the head of the sacraments. It is a sacrament of the New Testament. It was instituted when the New Testament dispensation was introduced: and it was instituted by Christ himself. The sign in this ordinance is the application of water, and of water only, without the addition of any thing else, to the subject. The mode in which water is to be applied we shall consider hereafter.

Baptism is to be *administered in the name of the Trinity*, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. By this are acknowledged, that there is a Trinity of persons in the God-head; that the person baptized is devoted to this triune God; that all the saving blessings signified in this ordinance are given by the Father, for the sake of the Son, and through the application of the Holy Ghost: and that all the persons of the Trinity are engaged in the work of salvation, and proffer blessings to the subject of the ordinance. Baptism in the name of the Trinity is essential to the validity of the ordinance; and it is also essential to its validity that it be performed by a minister of the gospel; for in our text the commission was given to such, and we have no account in Scripture, that the ordinance was ad-

ministered by any others, than those authorized to preach the gospel.

The *things signified* in baptism are the blood and Spirit of Christ. The water implies that we are polluted and guilty by sin; and represents to us justification by the blood of Christ, and regeneration and sanctification by his Spirit. It signifies and seals our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace and our engagement to be the Lord's.

It signifies these things. It is a *sign* of ingrafting into Christ. Not that a person by receiving this ordinance, does become really united to Christ, and savingly interested in him; but that this ordinance is a sign of this union and represents it. It is also a sign of partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace. All the blessings of this covenant, which were purchased by the blood of Christ, and which are applied by the Holy Spirit, are signified by the water in this ordinance, and are hereby represented as offered to us. And it is also a sign of our engagements to be the Lord's. It signifies that the subject is devoted to the service of the triune God.

Baptism is also a *seal* of these things. A seal is a standing evidence of the reality of a covenant, and it binds the parties to the performance of the conditions. Baptism is a standing evidence of the reality of the covenant of grace: and God hereby graciously obligates himself to bestow the things signified in baptism; or Christ, and all the benefits of the covenant of grace, on those who believe in the Saviour. And the subject baptized, hereby becomes solemnly engaged to be the Lord's.

Hence we may see the propriety of requiring engagements of persons, when they offer themselves, or when, as the representatives of their children, they offer them in baptism. Some object to such engagements. But if baptism be a seal of the covenant of grace—and that it is, is evident, if it has come in the room of circumcision; for Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had;" Rom. iv. 11; then every person who comes to this ordinance does virtually engage and does really and firmly bind himself, to perform all that we require him to promise, whether he does formally promise or not. Baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace; and you do therefore in this ordinance,

when you either offer yourselves, or as their representatives, present your children, avouch the Lord to be your God, and bind yourselves to be his people, whether you make any explicit engagements or not. And the engagements which we require, are only those which you bind yourselves to fulfil by setting your seal to them in receiving the ordinance. How absurd would it be for a man to set his seal to a covenant, and thereby bind himself to fulfil the articles of it, when at the same time, if it were read to him, he would be unwilling to give his assent to it! Equally absurd would it be to set our seal of baptism to God's covenant, and thereby bind ourselves to perform what is therein required, and yet when what is required is recited to us, be unwilling to give our assent.

We proceed,

II. To consider the proper *mode* of applying water, in the ordinance of baptism.

This is a subject, which for a few centuries, has been considerably agitated in the christian church. Some hold the immersion or dipping of the whole body to be essential to the ordinance, and the only true mode of baptism; and consider all persons who have pretended to receive it in any other way, to have received it in vain, and to be unbaptized persons. On the contrary we, with the greater part of the christian church, hold, that sprinkling, or pouring of water, or washing with it, or in any way applying it to the body, or any part of it, is a proper mode of baptism. Embracing, with a spirit of christian charity, those who may differ from us in opinion, or practice, on this circumstantial of our religion (for it certainly cannot be an essential, involving our salvation) I beg a candid, unprejudiced, and impartial hearing, while I endeavour to offer some reasons, in support of our practice.

It is readily and cheerfully granted, that baptism by immersion, or plunging, or dipping, is real baptism, and that the ordinance may be rightly administered in this way; and we do not pretend to baptize again, those who join our churches, after they have received the ordinance in this way. But at the same time we hold, that as water is only a sign, and in itself confers no grace, a handful is as good as an ocean, and equally answers the purpose of a sign. We hold that no mode, to the exclusion of all oth-

ers, is taught in the Scriptures ; and that the mode whether by immersion, pouring, washing, or sprinkling, is indifferent, as to the right administration of the ordinance, and its acceptableness in the sight of God. Although at the same time we believe, there are reasons which render one mode more expedient than another.

That immersion is not essential to the right administration of the ordinance ; but that it is rightly administered by pouring, washing, or sprinkling, we proceed now to prove.

1. From the meaning of the word. The advocates of immersion as essential to the validity of the ordinance have laid much stress upon this. I am not accustomed, in my sermons to enter into criticisms on words ; but I feel myself constrained to do it here ; because much stress has been laid upon the original word, as always signifying immersion and nothing else ; and hence has been inferred that baptism and immersion signify the same thing.— The original word used for baptize in the Scriptures, is *baptizo*, which is derived from *bapto*. The word *bapto* is never used when the ordinance of baptism is meant.— However as this is the root from which *baptizo* is derived, it will be proper to make a few observations upon it. It is acknowledged that this word signifies to dip, but this is not its only meaning. We find the word used in the Septuagint translation of the Bible, in the following passage in Daniel, " His body was *wet* (or baptized) with the dew of heaven ;" Dan. iv. 33. Here the word is used to express a wetting with the dew, which certainly was not by immersion. Homer, whose authority for the right use of Greek words no scholar will question, used this word to express a colouring or staining of a lake with blood. Aristophanes another Greek writer uses it to express a besmearing the face with certain washes. And Aristotle uses it to express a staining the hand with a certain substance pressed in it. From these instances we confidently draw the conclusion, that the word *bapto* does not exclusively signify immersion ; but that it may signify any kind of wetting, whatever the mode may be. And therefore if anything is to be concluded as to mode from the meaning of the word *bapto*, it is, that water applied in any way in this ordinance, is baptism. We shall come to the same conclusion if we consider the meaning of the word

baptizo, derived from *bapto*. *Baptizo* is the word used. whenever the ordinance of baptism is meant. To understand the real meaning of this word, let us examine some of those passages of scripture, in which the ordinance of Baptism is not meant; and if it can be shown that the word is ever used in any other sense than to immerse, the conclusion will necessarily follow, that no argument can be drawn from the meaning of the word, in favour of immersion as the only mode. In Hebrews ix. 10, the Apostle speaking of the Jewish worship says, "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings," in the original, baptisms. In the ceremonial washings which are here expressed by the word used for baptisms, water was undoubtedly applied, as must appear if we look through the ceremonial law, by pouring and sprinkling, as well as by dipping. Our Saviour speaking of the traditions of the elders, held by the Pharisees, Mark. vii. 4; said, "And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables." In this passage the word translated washing, is in the original, baptism; and here the word is used to express any kind of washing. Some of the vessels, mentioned in this passage, may have been dipped in water when they were washed or baptized, though this is not certain; but it is highly probable, that to some of them, such as tables, the water was applied by pouring or sprinkling, and not by dipping. In the same chapter our Saviour speaking of the Pharisees said, "When they come from the market, except they wash, (in the original, baptize) they eat not;" Mark. vii. 4. I ask, is it at all probable that the word here signifies immersion? The Pharisees, every time they came from the market, before they ate, washed or baptized themselves. It is not at all probable, that they every time immersed themselves. Again, a Pharisee, seeing our Saviour eat with unwashed hands, marvelled that he had not first washed (original baptized) before dinner;" Luk. xi. 38. Here the word which is used to express baptism, is used for the washing of hands. But in washing the hands, it is not necessary that they be immersed, If a Pharisee washed or baptized his hands in a basin, he would probably immerse them, in whole or in part; but if he washed or baptized at a spout of water, he would not immerse them at all. The obvious inference

from all these passages is, that the original word for baptism does not signify immersion; but washing, without regard to the mode in which the water is applied. And therefore the conclusion is, that no argument in favour of immersion, as the only mode of baptism, can be drawn from the meaning of the original word; but on the other hand, as the word is used to express every kind of washing, in whatever way water may be applied, it argues that the application of water in any way, in this ordinance is baptism.

2. That immersion is not essential to the right administration of the ordinance of baptism; but that the ordinance is rightly administered, by the application of water in any other way, may be proved from the circumstances attending the baptisms recorded in the Scriptures. John is said to have baptized in Jordan; and also in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there. And our Saviour is said to have been baptized of John in Jordan; and when he was baptized, to have come up straightway out of the water. On the baptisms of John, I would observe, that even admitting he baptized by immersion, his example ought not to be adduced as a certain evidence of the mode of christian baptism; for John's baptism was not christian baptism. In proof of this assertion, many arguments might be adduced. But one is sufficient. In the 19th chapter of the Acts of the apostles we find Paul at Ephesus, baptizing in the name of Christ, some who told him that they had before received John's baptism. This he certainly would not have done, if the baptism of John had been christian baptism. But admitting that the baptism of John was a proper precedent for the mode of christian baptism, and that he baptized by immersion, it would only prove that immersion is a right mode, but not at all that every other mode is wrong. But even this cannot be proved. It may be that he did immerse; but I will confidently assert that it cannot be certainly proved that he did in a single instance. Neither can it be proved, that there was a single instance of it in all the examples of Scripture. On John's baptizing in Ænon near to Salim, because there was much water there, much stress is laid; but the original signifies many waters, or many streams of water; and travellers tell us there are many small brooks in that region, but none

of them above ankle deep. That John is said to have baptized in Jordan, and the persons baptized are said to have gone down into, and to have come up out of the water, is no certain proof that they were immersed; for it is no where said that they went under the water. Even admitting that they went into the water, they might have done this for the purpose of pouring or sprinkling. The climate was warm, and persons either went barefoot, or wore only sandals or a kind of soles tied under their feet; and it was natural, and refreshing, to step into the water, when they were at a river side, even if they were to be baptized by pouring or sprinkling. But there is no certain evidence that they went into the water at all, or even wet the soles of their feet. For it is well known to those acquainted with the Greek language, in which the New Testament was originally written, that the word *en* translated *in*, as in the text, "And were all baptized of him *in* the river of Jordan;" Mark i. 5, may be and often is rendered, *nigh*, *near*, *at* and *by*; that the word *eis*, translated *into*, as in the passage, "They went down *into* the water;" Acts viii. 38, signifies also *to* or *unto*; and that the words *apo* and *ek* translated *out of*, as in the passage, "When they were come up *out of* the water;" Acts viii. 39, might with equal propriety have been translated *from*. So that these expressions on which so much stress is often laid—such as "Baptized *in* the river of Jordan; they went down *into* the water, and when they were come up *out* of the water," may signify according to the frequent use of the words, baptized *at*, *near*, or *by* Jordan; they went down *to* the water, and they came up *from* the water. From these remarks the conclusion is confidently drawn, that there is nothing in the account which we have of John's mode of baptism, that proves immersion to be the only proper mode. Review the reasoning. John's baptism was not christian baptism. If it were, and it were certain he baptized by immersion, it would only prove the ordinance is rightly administered in this way; but not at all that every other way is wrong. But it cannot be proved that he certainly administered it in this way. Even admitting it to be true, as our English translation renders the original, that they went down into the water, this does not prove that the baptized went under the water. But further there is no certain evidence that they even stepped

into the water or wet their feet, as the original words will bear translating, they went down *to*, and came up *from* the water.

The same remarks which were made on John's baptism show that nothing can be proved as to the mode from the baptism of the eunuch by Philip. On this instance, I would only remark, that if it proves any thing in favour of immersion, it proves too much. For there is as much evidence from the history that Philip went under the water, as that the eunuch did. The history is as follows, "And they went down *both* into the water, *both* Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water;" Acts viii. 38, 39. We have now examined the strongest examples in favour of immersion, and have seen that they contain no certain evidence that immersion was practised at all, and much less that it is the only proper mode.

Let us now attend to some other instances, where we have at least presumptive evidence against immersion. There were three thousand baptized in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. We do not hear that they were immersed, or that they were by a stream or pool of water. Peter baptized Cornelius and those that were collected in his house; and we have every reason to believe that they were baptized in the house; for we do not hear that they went out; and it is not at all probable, that there were conveniences in the house for immersing them. Paul also baptized the jailer and his household; and it is certainly, very improbable, that he, a prisoner, went out of the precincts of the prison, in the night, to seek a place suitable for immersion; and it is equally improbable, that there was a place suitable for it in the prison. In all these instances, the presumption is certainly against immersion. And it is worthy of remark that in all the instances of baptism recorded in Scripture, there is not a single instance mentioned of the baptizer, and persons to be baptized, leaving the place where they were worshiping, and going to some other to seek water to be baptized. But in every instance as soon as they were ready to receive baptism, we find themimmediately baptized, in the place in which they then were, whether it was by a river side, on the road, in the city, in a house, or in a prison; and in no instance is the particular mode mentioned. Can it

be possible then that a particular mode is essential to the validity of the ordinance? Most assuredly if it is, we might have expected that mode to have been particularly pointed out.

3. That immersion is not essential to the ordinance of baptism, but that it is rightly administered, by pouring, sprinkling, or washing, may be further proved from the Scripture allusions to this ordinance. We are said to be buried with Christ by baptism. The passage is found, Rom. vi. 3, 4; "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." There is a similar passage, Col. ii. 12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him." Much stress has been laid upon these passages to prove that immersion is the only proper mode. But if there be an allusion to the mode at all in these passages, which is certainly doubtful, they only prove that immersion is a proper mode, and not that it is the only mode. But there is no certain evidence that the Apostle alludes at all to the mode. It is evident he is speaking of the spiritual meaning of baptism. It signified our union to Christ, and conformity to him, in his death, burial, and resurrection. By baptism we profess that as he died, so we have become dead to sin; as he was buried, so sin in our souls should be buried; and as he rose from the dead, so should we rise unto newness of life. In the same connexion, we are said by baptism to be *planted* together in the likeness of his death, to have our old man *crucified* with him, and to be *circumcised* in him. If in the word *buried*, therefore, there is an allusion to the mode of baptism, there is equal reason to suppose an allusion in the words *planted*, *crucified*, and *circumcised*, which is not plead for. If we suppose the mode to be alluded to in these passages, we must carry the allusion through, and to be consistent, and correct, must have something in the mode to express planting, crucifixion, and circumcision, as well as burial.

Let us now attend to the allusions in Scripture which favour our mode of administering the ordinance. The things signified by baptism, as has been observed, are the blood of Christ by which we are justified, and his Spirit by which we are renewed and sanctified. These are frequently represented by sprinkling, and pouring. Thus

we know that under the Old Testament dispensation, the blood of Christ, which was to take away sin was constantly represented by the sprinkling of the blood of the numerous sacrifices which were offered. I need not point you to particular passages. The books of Moses abound with them. In the epistle to the Hebrews the blood of Christ is called "the blood of sprinkling;" Heb. xii. 24. And Peter also speaks "of the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ;" 1 Pet. i. 2. As therefore baptism represents the blood of Christ, spiritually sprinkled on our hearts, for the pardon of sin, it is very properly and expressively performed by sprinkling. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of Christ and gospel times, seemed to predict the ordinance of baptism by sprinkling. "As many (said he) were astonished at thee; (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men;) so shall he *sprinkle* many nations;" Is. lii. 14, 15. Ezekiel also seemed to predict the same, when speaking of gospel times he said, "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you and ye shall be clean;" Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

The influences of the Holy Spirit, which is the other thing signified by baptism, are also frequently represented by sprinkling and pouring. The Spirit is said to "*come down* like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth;" Ps. lxxii. 6. And in the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts *sprinkled* from an evil conscience;" Heb. x. 22.

The Scriptures frequently speak of baptism with the Holy Ghost: and baptism with water is evidently a sign of baptism with the Holy Ghost. Just before his ascension, our Saviour promised to his apostles, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence;" Acts i. 5. This promise was fulfiled on the day of Pentecost. Now how were they baptized with the Holy Ghost on that day? We learn from the 2d chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which gives an account of that baptizing, where, in one place the Spirit is said to be *poured out*, and in another *shed down*. And in the 10th chapter of the Acts, where we have an account of Peter's preaching in the house of Cornelius, it is recorded, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost *fell* on all them

which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed, were astonished as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was *poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost; Acts x. 44, 45. From all these texts, it is evident that the things signified by baptism, are very frequently expressed by sprinkling, and pouring; and indeed they are far more frequently expressed by these terms than by any which signify immersion; and hence we conclude that the sign is properly performed by sprinkling or pouring.

And I would observe further, that these are by far the most expedient modes, as they are adapted to all ages, to all situations, to all circumstances, to all countries, and to all seasons, which the mode of immersion is not.

And further I would ask the question, if none but those who have been immersed are truly baptized, is it at all probable, that God would bless, as he does, those, who on this principle neglect the ordinance of baptism, which is so frequently enjoined? There can be no question, but the Lord blesses with the things signified by baptism, many of those societies, which only sprinkle or pour, as much at least, as he does those which immerse. They have the testimony of God in the saving blessings which he bestows that he approves of their mode. Look at the frequent and extensive revivals of religion, with which our church has been blessed? And would God so greatly bless us, if we are all living in the constant neglect of a very important ordinance, and have no visible connexion with his covenant? Our brethren may disown us, and refuse to hold communion with us, because in their estimation we are unbaptized persons, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise; but the Lord has given the best of testimonies that he owns us as a part of his church, by the Holy Spirit which he hath given us. I ask again brethren, is it possible that the long list of eminent saints who have been greatly useful in the world, in promoting the cause of Christ, and who were admitted to intimate communion with him, were unbaptized persons, and did not belong to his church on earth? Were such men as Owen, and Baxter, and Flavel, and Watts, and Doddridge, and Newton, and Scott, and Edwards, and Dickinson, and Davies, and thousands of others like them, unbaptized persons,

and without a standing in the church of Christ on earth? It cannot be.

But enough has been said to convince every unprejudiced mind, that immersion is not essentially necessary to baptism; but that it is rightly performed by sprinkling, pouring, or washing. If immersion were necessary to the validity of such an important ordinance, we might certainly expect a 'thus saith the Lord', for it; but none can be produced. The original word signifies any kind of washing. No example can be produced in Scripture, from which it certainly appears, that immersion was used, while there are examples in which the probability is that it was not used. The things signified by baptism are more frequently represented by sprinkling and pouring than in any other way. God has eminently blessed those who use pouring and sprinkling. And these are modes which are best adapted to all circumstances. Hence we conclude, that while baptism is rightly performed by immersion, it is also rightly performed by pouring or sprinkling; and that the latter are the more expedient modes.

SERMON XCVIII.

INFANT BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

"*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

On the last Sabbath we attended to the general nature of baptism, and the mode in which it is rightly administered. We come now to treat of the proper *subjects* of this ordinance. Should baptism be administered only to adults? Or ought it to be administered also to infants? The former is held by some. But we, with far the greater

part of the christian church, affirm the latter, and accordingly practice.

The object at present is to prove that *infants ought to be baptized.*

And here it may be proper to remark, that the object is only to establish the right of infants in general, without intending to intimate, that all infants indiscriminately, whatever be the qualifications of parents, have this right.

The right of infants to baptism we argue,

From *infant circumcision.* Circumcision was a seal of the covenant which God made with Abraham. This was the covenant of grace. Infants of eight days old, were admitted to circumcision, and thus were introduced to a visible standing in the covenant of grace. Baptism has come in the room of circumcision ; and therefore should be applied to the same subjects, unless a command to the contrary can be produced. This cannot be done. And therefore infants are to be baptized. The correctness of this reasoning, and of the conclusion drawn from it, I will now proceed to show.

The first point to be settled and one of great importance on this subject is, was the covenant which God made with Abraham, the covenant of grace ? What relates to this covenant we have contained in the 12th, 13th, 15th, 17th, and 22nd chapters of Genesis. The passages are too long to quote in this place. In this covenant God made several promises to Abraham and his seed. These promises on examining the chapters just mentioned, we find may be reduced to the following particulars, viz. that Abraham's name should be great ; that he should be a great blessing ; that God would bless them that blessed him, and curse them that cursed him ; that he should have a numerous seed ; that when in bondage in Egypt they should be delivered therefrom ; that they should inherit the land of Canaan, and be powerful possessing the gates of their enemies ; that he would be Abraham's shield and exceeding great reward, his God and the God of his seed ; and that in him and his seed all the families and nations of the earth should be blessed. Such were the promises of the covenant made with Abraham.

In this covenant we assert was contained the covenant of grace. It is true, some of these promises related to

temporal blessings. Of this nature were the promises of a numerous seed, their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, their inheriting the land of Canaan, and their possessing the gates of their enemies. But even these promises had a connexion with the covenant of grace. And although some say, we find nothing of the covenant of grace in the whole of the Abrahamic covenant; yet, perhaps, there was not a promise in that covenant, which had not a reference to the covenant of grace. Even those promises, in this covenant, which we allow to have been of a temporal nature, were promises of the covenant of grace, in like manner, as under the New Testament, godliness has the promise of the life that now is. Besides, the promise of a numerous progeny, as will be shown presently, looked further than the natural seed of Abraham; embracing also the spiritual seed of Christ, who was according to the flesh, the Seed of Abraham. Also the land of Canaan, though a temporal blessing, was given to be the dwelling place of the church, that it might be separated from the world; and to be to the spiritual seed a type, and an earnest of the heavenly inheritance. The deliverance from Egyptian bondage was not merely the deliverance of Israel considered as a nation; but also and more especially as the church of God. And the seed possessing the gates of their enemies, may refer to the victories of the church, as well as of Israel considered as a nation. And in fact, it does appear, that instead of there being nothing spiritual in the covenant made with Abraham, the principal and ultimate meaning of every word in that covenant was spiritual; and every word was connected with the carrying on of the great plan of redemption through a Saviour to come.

But let us attend more particularly to the proof of the proposition, that the covenant made with Abraham, was not a mere national, and temporal covenant, containing only temporal promises of national or individual blessings; but that it contained promises of spiritual and eternal blessings, and was really the covenant of grace.

1. One of the promises of the covenant made with Abraham was, that he should have a numerous seed. This promise we have contained in the following passages. Gen. xii. 2; "I will make of thee a great nation." Gen. xiii. 16; "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so

that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered." Gen. xv. 5; "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him so shall thy seed be." Gen. xvii. 2, 4, 5, 6; "I will multiply thee exceedingly—thou shalt be a father of many nations. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee and kings shall come out of thee." And Gen. xxii. 17; "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." These were the promises of the covenant, respecting the numerous seed of Abraham. These promises were literally fulfilled; for the natural posterity of Abraham were very numerous. Not only the Israelites; but also the Ishmaelites, and Midianites, and Sabeans, and Shuhites, and Ashurites, and Edomites all sprang from him. But the promise of a numerous seed had also a spiritual meaning; and related to a numerous seed of believers in Christ, not only of the natural posterity of Abraham; but of every nation under heaven, who have come, or shall yet come to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. It was in this sense, especially and emphatically that God promised to Abraham, that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore. For this assertion we have the unquestionable authority of the New Testament. Rom. iv. 11, 16, 17; "That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised. Therefore it (that is the promise) is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to *all* the seed, not to that only which is of the law (that is the Israelites) but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written (quoting the very promise of the covenant which we are considering) I have made thee a father of many nations. Also, Gal. iii. 9. 28, 29; They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. There is neither Jew nor Greek—ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye also Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." From these texts it clearly appears, that believers of every nation, as well as the natural posterity of Abraham, were intended by the promise of a numerous seed. And therefore the

covenant made with Abraham was not merely a national covenant but the covenant of grace.

2. A second remarkable promise in this covenant was, that in Abraham and his seed should all the families and nations of the earth be blessed. This promise we have in the two following passages: Gen. xii. 3; "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxii. 18; "In thy Seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It could not be true in any other than a spiritual sense, that in Abraham and his Seed should all the families and nations of the earth be blessed; for the temporal blessings promised to Abraham never have, and never will come upon all the families and nations of the earth. This promise must be understood in a spiritual sense, as having a particular reference to the Messiah, who according to the flesh was to spring from Abraham, and to the blessings of grace which through him were to be offered and extended to all nations. For the earth is yet to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord and of his grace through Christ; and then will all the families and nations of the earth be blessed in Abraham, and his Seed Christ. The New Testament has placed this matter in a clear light, and unequivocally favours this interpretation of the promise in the Abrahamic covenant, which we are considering. Peter preaching to the Jews, Acts iii. 25; made use of this promise as a reason why they should accept Christ and his gospel; because they were the natural descendants of Abraham, to whom more especially this promise was made; and thus evidently applied it to Christ and his gospel. "Ye are (said he) the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, and in thy Seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." And on this account it was that the gospel was first preached unto the Jews, as Peter added in the next verse, "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Again that the promise we are considering, was a promise of a Saviour, and of spiritual blessings through him is unquestionably proved from Gal. iii. 8. The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen, through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed." Observe, it is here expressly

said, that *the gospel was preached* in this article of the Abrahamic covenant, "In thee shall all nations be blessed." Again, in the 16th verse of the same chapter we read, "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy *Seed*, which is *Christ*." Here the Seed spoken of in the Abrahamic covenant is expressly said to be Christ. From the above texts it is clearly evident, that Christ and his gospel were contained in the Abrahamic covenant; and if so, most assuredly it was the covenant of grace.

3. Another remarkable promise of the Abrahamic covenant was, that God would be Abraham's God, and the God of his seed. This promise we have contained, Gen. xvii. 7, 8; "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a *God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and *I will be their God.*" This promise of the Abrahamic covenant, that God would be Abraham's God, and the God of his seed, was a promise not merely of earthly good things; but of spiritual and eternal blessings. For we find in the New Testament, that this promise is the sum of all the blessings promised in the covenant of grace. Agreeably to this the Apostle, Heb. viii. 10, speaking of the New Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace, said, quoting the words of Jeremiah, "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: "*And I will be to them a God.*" That the covenant of grace is meant in this passage is unquestionable: but the sum of the blessings of this covenant, are here included in the promise, "I will be to them a God." And Rev. xxi. 3; the whole sum of spiritual and eternal blessings are thus expressed, "God himself shall be with them, and be their God." And indeed a greater good than this cannot possibly be promised; for if God be ours, every other blessing must be ours. But that this promise, in the Abrahamic covenant, referred to spiritual and eternal blessings, further appears from the application of it by the Apostle, Heb. xi. 16; where speaking of

the natural seed of Abraham that died in faith he said, "But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called *their God.*" This text certainly teaches us, that God was called the God of the natural seed of Abraham of whom the Apostle here spoke, in a higher sense, than as a political head, or a temporal benefactor. But with the unprejudiced mind the exposition which our Saviour gave of this promise, when he proved from it to the Sadducees, the resurrection of the dead and a future state of blessedness, must place this matter beyond doubt; "But as touching the resurrection of the dead (said he) have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living;" Mat. xxii. 31, 32.

It is objected to the interpretation which we have given and endeavoured to establish, of this promise, that if it imported that God would be the everlasting God of Abraham and his seed, it would imply that all the natural seed of Abraham were saved? To this I answer; it is evident that the seed is to be taken in a restricted sense: for although Abraham had many children, yet the Lord said to him, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called;" Gen. xx. 12. Esau was afterwards cast off, and the promise restricted to Jacob and his children. And the Apostle hath told us, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel;" Rom. ix. 6. In which he restricted the promise in its saving application to the believing seed of Jacob. The objection therefore will not lie against what has been said.

The import of the promise, "I will be the God of your seed," I suppose to be this, that God covenanted to be the everlasting God of all the believing seed of Abraham; and further that he would keep up his church, among the natural circumcised seed of Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob, until Christ should come and be externally in a spiritual sense their God, in the same sense as he is visibly the God of every professor of religion under the New Testament; and further that he would keep up among the natural circumcised seed, a spiritual believing seed, to which he would be really, and in the highest sense a God, until Christ the eminent Seed should come, to whom as the Seed of Abraham according to the flesh, the promises

were more especially made and through him to all believers his spiritual seed. This exposition appears to be agreeable to the reasoning of the apostle in the 9th, 10th, and 11th chapters of the epistle to the Romans.

Review now what has been said to illustrate the nature of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, and then say, was not this covenant of a spiritual nature? It has been shown from the New Testament, that the promise of a numerous seed, related, not only to the natural posterity of Abraham; but also to believers in Christ; that Christ was promised in this covenant, and that the blessings of it flowed through him; that the gospel of salvation through Christ was preached in this covenant; and that God herein engaged to be the everlasting God of all who kept it. The passages which have been quoted from the New Testament, certainly teach us these things, as plainly and unequivocally as language can. And if the Abrahamic covenant does contain such promises, the conclusion must follow, that it was not a mere national or temporal covenant, but really and truly the covenant of grace.

But in addition to the arguments which have already been adduced, the New Testament furnishes further evidences of this truth. Zacharias the father of John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost, spake of the appearance of the Saviour, and salvation through him, as the mercy promised to the fathers, and the substance of God's holy covenant, the oath which he sware to Abraham; Luk. i. 67—73. Christ and salvation through him were therefore included in the Abrahamic covenant.

Again, the Apostle testified that believers in Christ "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" Gal. iii. 29. What promise did the apostle here mean? Most assuredly not the possession of the land of Canaan, nor any other of the temporal blessings, promised to Abraham and his natural seed. The promise made to Abraham and his seed of which believers are heirs, must be spiritual; and therefore such promises were contained in the Abrahamic covenant, and consequently it was the covenant of grace.

Again, we read Gal. iii. 17, that the covenant made with Abraham was confirmed of God in Christ. But assuredly such a covenant can be none other than the covenant of grace.

nd further, circumcision which was a seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was, according to the apostle, Rom. iv. 11, "a seal of the righteousness of faith." "And he (that is Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised." By the righteousness of faith must be meant, the righteousness of Christ received by faith. Consequently the righteousness of faith, or the righteousness of Christ received by faith, was included in the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was the seal, and therefore this covenant was the covenant of grace.

From all that has been said we now confidently draw the conclusion, that the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace.

This covenant was the basis of the Old Testament church. Yea, on this covenant does the New Testament church now stand. Believers under the New Testament dispensation are, in Christ, the spiritual seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promises of this covenant. Abraham is the father of all them that believe, whether Jew or Gentile, and in this covenant was he constituted such. This is the covenant from which, as the apostle teaches, Rom. xi, 17, &c. the Jews have been broken off through unbelief, and into which the Gentiles have been graffed by faith. The church has always been one, and so has the covenant of grace. The same church, the same covenant of grace, and the same way of salvation existed before the incarnation of Christ as since. The differences in different ages has only been in the manner of dispensing the same grace of God.

Of the Abrahamic covenant, which we have proved to be the covenant of grace, circumcision was the sign and seal. Thus, Gen. xvii. 10, 11, 13, it is called *the covenant*, by which must be meant a sign and seal of the covenant; and it is also called a *token* of the covenant. The apostle has taught the same, Rom. iv. 11; "He (that is Abraham) received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had." Hence it is evident, circumcision was a sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant. To have a visible standing in this covenant, it was necessary to be circumcised. For we read Gen. xvii. 13, 14; "My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh

of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." Circumcision then was necessary to a visible standing in the Abrahamic covenant, and therefore in the covenant of grace, and the church of God; and those who received it, had a visible standing in the covenant of grace.

Now who were the subjects of this ordinance? this sign and seal of the covenant of grace? Read the divine command on this subject, Gen. xvii. 10, 12, 14, "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you; and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations. And the uncircumcised man child—that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant. Infants of eight days old were to be circumcised, and a severe penalty was threatened in case they were not. The conclusion necessarily follows, that infants once had a right to the initiating sign of the covenant of grace, the seal of the righteousness of faith. They once had a visible standing in the covenant of grace and the church of God.

Our time requires that I should here pause for the present. God willing on the morning of the next Lord's day, I will resume and finish this subject.

SERMON XCIX.

INFANT BAPTISM.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 19.

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

On the last Sabbath morning I endeavoured to prove that the covenant, which God made with Abraham, was

the covenant of grace. This is a point of primary importance, in the controversy respecting infant baptism, and therefore I have been the more particular in endeavouring fully to establish it. And I trust it has been established, to the satisfaction of every unprejudiced person who has attended to the arguments and understood them.

We shall therefore in this discourse assume it as an established principle, that the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace. It was also shown in the discourse alluded to on this subject, that circumcision was a sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant, and therefore a sign and seal of the covenant of grace; and that infants of eight days old, were, by the express command of God, circumcised, and thus introduced into a visible standing in the covenant of grace.

The next point which claims our attention is, has baptism come in the room of circumcision?

Circumcision has undoubtedly been abrogated. From its very nature, as being by the shedding of blood, typical of the blood of Christ which was to be shed, it was proper that it should cease to be a seal of the covenant, when he had actually appeared, and shed his blood to make atonement for sin. And it is abundantly evident, especially from the writings of Paul, that it was done away, and ceased to be a seal of the covenant, under the New Testament. Baptism was instituted to be a sign and seal of the covenant of grace under the New Testament; and that it came in the room of circumcision, we prove by the following arguments.

1. They were both *initiating rites*. Circumcision formerly introduced the subject into a visible standing in God's covenant and church, and was the evidence of such standing. The same is the case now with respect to baptism.

2. The *signification* of both ordinances is the same, except in those points in which the difference of dispensation required a difference. Both signify the guilt and pollution of the subject; and both represent the blood of Christ, and justification by faith in his blood. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith; and we are baptized in the name of Christ, for the remission of sins which is through faith in his blood. Circumcision represented regeneration and sanctification, or the cutting

off the body of sin; and agreeably to this we read of a circumcision of heart, by which is evidently meant regeneration and sanctification. Baptism undoubtedly represents the same or a cleansing from the pollution of sin. Since therefore the one was instituted on the abrogation of the other, and occupies the same place in the covenant, and signifies the same things, is it not a just conclusion that it has come in its room?

3. Further, that baptism has come in the room of circumcision, appears from the following *passage*, *Col.* ii. 11, 12. "In whom also (that is Christ) ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." In this passage the apostle identifies the two ordinances, and represents regeneration and sanctification by them both, and uses the terms circumcision and baptism indiscriminately; whence we again infer that since the former has been done away, the latter has come in its room.

4. The same may be argued from the consideration that *Christ came to enlarge*, and not to take away or abridge the privileges of the church; and circumcision was a privilege, as we learn from the answer which the apostle gave to the question, "What profit is there of circumcision? much every way;" Rom. iii. 1, 2. Since then circumcision was a privilege and has ceased, if nothing has come in its room, Christ has abridged the privileges of the church, which is contrary to the whole tenor of the New Testament.

From all these considerations we draw the conclusion, that baptism under the New Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace has come in the room of circumcision under the old. Both are initiating ordinances, both signify and seal the same things, they are identified by the apostle, the privileges of the church have been enlarged, and circumcision was a privilege, and in addition to all these the one ceased about the time the other was instituted.

Considering this point now as established, that baptism has come in the room of circumcision as a seal of the covenant of grace, the consequence will follow, that baptism

is to be applied to the same subjects now, as circumcision was formerly, unless we can find a direction of God in his word forbidding it. For the change of the seal does not affect the covenant or the subjects. As for instance should the leader of an army see proper to change the uniform of his soldiers, or the badge by which they had been distinguished as his—there would be no necessity of pointing out who should wear it. The same persons who had been entitled to wear the old badge, would of course wear the new one, unless they were forbidden. In like manner when our Saviour instituted baptism as the ordinance of admission into his visible church, and gave to his apostles the commission contained in our text; there was no necessity that he should point out the subjects of this ordinance, unless he intended to take away the right of admission into his visible church from some who had before possessed it. For the apostles would of course apply the new seal to the same description of persons as had before received the old. As under the old dispensation the proselytes who were received into the church from the Gentile world, had first to be taught the nature of the Jewish religion, and to profess their faith in it, before they could be circumcised and admitted to a standing in the church; but being circumcised and admitted themselves, their children were entitled of course—so the apostles when commissioned to baptize, would naturally, unless forbidden, pursue the same course. They would first teach the nature of the christian dispensation, and those adults who professed to believe in it they would baptize, and then apply the seal to their children of course, as coming in with them.

It does not lie upon us to prove that there is an express command in the New Testament for infant baptism; but upon those who deny infant baptism, to prove that it is forbidden; and until this is done the argument for infant baptism from infant circumcision will remain unshaken. For infants once had a visible standing in the church and the covenant of grace. This right was given to them by God himself; and none but God has a right to take it away. Has he then taken away this right? Has he forbidden children to be any more introduced to a visible standing in the church? Where is this prohibition contained? In what part of the New Testament? It cannot be found.

The silence of the New Testament is urged as a grand argument against infant baptism. But this silence so far from being against, is altogether in favour of infant baptism. If children of parents in visible covenant, were to have continued unto them, under the New Testament dispensation, the privilege of admission to a visible standing in God's church and covenant, which they had enjoyed from the time of Abraham, there was no necessity that a single word should be said about it. For the initiating seal or baptism would of course be applied to them as circumcision had formerly been. But if on the other hand, children who had long enjoyed the right to have the seal of God's covenant applied to them, were on the introduction of the New Testament dispensation to be deprived of this right, then there would have been great need, and it was of high importance that this should have been clearly and explicitly made known, and left on record, by the great Head of the church, in his word. And we cannot reasonably suppose it would have been omitted. And since the New Testament has no where said a word, prohibiting the initiating seal of the covenant to infants, the natural, just, and necessary conclusion is, that their right has not been taken away, but that they still retain it, and therefore ought to be baptized.

Will it be objected that the command was, *repent*, *believe*, and be *baptized*, and since infants are incapable of these exercises, that therefore this amounts to a prohibition? This is a very popular objection against infant baptism; but it is more specious than solid. Let us give the objection its full force, and if it proves any thing, it will prove too much, and will inevitably lead to a consequence which the objector dares not admit. We find every where in the New Testament, repentance and faith held up as essential to salvation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Luk. xiii. 3. "He that believeth not shall be damned;" Mark xvi. 16. On the principle of the objector, as infants are incapable of exercising repentance and faith, they must be incapable of salvation. This dreadful consequence follows by the same reasoning, by which he proves that infants should not be baptized. The Scriptures say repent believe, and be baptized, infants cannot repent and believe, therefore conclude our opponents, they cannot be baptized. The same course of

reasoning will exclude all infants from salvation. The Scriptures say repent, believe, and be saved, infants cannot repent and believe, therefore they cannot be saved. If the reasoning be good in the one case, it is good in the other. Yea the conclusion is much more legitimate from the premises in the latter case than the former; because the Scriptures expressly declare that without faith and repentance there can be no salvation; but they no where say that those who have not faith and repentance should not be baptized. The fact is that in both these cases, adults are meant. When the Scriptures tell us that faith and repentance are necessary to salvation, they mean in those capable of exercising them, viz. adults. And they mean the same when they speak of faith and repentance as qualifications for baptism. And it is readily conceded that unbaptized adults have no right to baptism, but upon a credible profession of faith and repentance. That adults to whom the apostles spake, were commanded to repent, believe, and be baptized, therefore argues nothing against infant baptism, or if it does prove any thing, inevitably proves too much. For the argument militates equally against the salvation of infants as against their baptism.

We confidently assert it again, that the New Testament, has no where taken away the right of infants to the initiating seal of God's gracious covenant. They once were judged fit subjects of the seal of the righteousness of faith, and had a right to have it put upon them; and therefore they still retain it, and consequently are to be baptized. If children are now forbidden, let such prohibition be produced, but until it is produced, we will rejoice in calling God, as his people of old did, *our God and the God of our seed.*

Here we might with safety rest the cause of infant baptism; but we have additional evidence of the truth of the doctrine. The New Testament not only does not say one word forbidding infant baptism; but on the contrary it gives us much postive evidence in its favour. If the New-Testament had been entirely *silent*, the just conclusion as has been shown would be that infants retained their right to the initiating seal; but this conclusion is strengthened by what is said in the New Testament.

From the whole of the New Testament, it is evident

the privileges of the church have been enlarged. Was it a privilege of the Old Testament church that children were admitted to the seal of God's gracious covenant? The saints of those ages esteemed it an inestimable privilege; and the Apostle testified that it was a great privilege, profiting much every way. And can it be possible that under the New Testament dispensation, in which privilges have been professedly enlarged, such an important one has been taken away? Besides what reason can be given why the privilege should be taken away? Children have now as much need of an interest in the blessings of God's covenant, as they had of old; and they are as capable now of receiving baptism as they once were of receiving circumcision. These considerations afford, at least presumptive evidence, that God intended that the initiating seal under the New Testament should still be applied to infants. The question has been asked what does the child know about baptism, and what benefit can it receive from a transaction of which it is entirely ignorant? In reply it may be asked, what did the Jewish child know about circumcision? No more than the child now knows about baptism, and yet by the express command of God it was circumcised; and this circumcision which the child received, was a seal of the righteousness of faith, and baptism is no more. And this circumcision, of which the child was entirely ignorant, profited much every way; and thefore the ignorance of the child respecting its baptism, at the time of receiving it, can form no argument against the propriety of administering it.

It has been shown, that if the New Testament were entirely silent, it would be an invincible argument in favour of infant baptism. But it is not silent, it affords positive evidence in our favour.

Our Saviour said, "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven;" Mat. xix. 14. By the kingdom of heaven we must understand, either the visible church of Christ in this world or the kingdom of glory above. Understood in either sense, the passage affords an argument in favour of the baptism of infants. For if they are fit members of the church on earth, undoubtly they have a right to the initiating seal, or baptism. And if they are fit to be members of the church of the first-born in heaven, undoubtedly they are fit to be members of the church on earth.

Again Peter, Acts ii. 38, 39; taught that the privilege of children to be admitted to a visible standing in the church was not taken away, but continued under the New Testament. And he urged th e continuance of this privilege as a reason why the Jews should be baptized. The Jews alarmed under his preaching, on the day of Pentecost asked what they should do? "Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ,for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the *promise is unto you, and to your children.*" The Jews were very jealous of the privileges which they had enjoyed under the Old Testament; and as appears from many passages of the New Testament, they were very much attached to circumcision, by which their children were introduced to a visible standing in the church and covenant of grace. Peter urged them to embrace the gospel, and receive the new seal of the covenant, assuring them that under the new dispensation, the promise should embrace their children as well as themselves, as it had done under the old.

Again, an argument in further confirmation of the right of infants to baptism, may be drawn from 1 Cor. 7. 14; "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they *holy.*" By *holy* here, must be meant, not an internal but a federal holiness, or a relation to the covenant, in virtue of the standing of the believing parent. And if it signifies their relation to the covenant they must have a right to the initiating seal, or baptism.

Again, we have several examples in the New Testament, of household baptisms. Lydia and her household, the jailer and all that were his, and the household of Stephanas, were baptized. It is true, there is no absolute certainty, that there were children in these families; but it is highly probable there were in some, if not in all of them. It is certainly far more probable there were, than that there were not. And a minister in the present day would certainly be warranted, by the example of the Apostle, in case an unbaptized head of a family should give him evidence of faith in Christ, and request baptism, to baptize him, and with him his household, even though there should be infants in that household. For Paul

baptized all the family when the head of it believed, without telling us of what ages the family were composed.—And why may not we do the same? Yea following the example of the apostle are we not bound to do the same?

Again, in addition to all the evidence which has been adduced in favour of infant baptism, we have the testimony of the history of the church, that this was the constant practice, without dispute, for many hundred years. Permit me to quote some of the testimonies of the primitive fathers on this subject. In the writings of Justin Martyr who lived about the middle of the second century, we find the following passage, "We have not received the carnal circumcision, but the spiritual, by baptism; and all are in like manner bound to receive it, as formerly circumcision." In this passage he evidently supposed baptism to have come in the room of circumcision, and that therefore it ought to be administered to the same subjects. Origen who lived about one hundred years after the death of the apostles, declared the baptism of infants to have been the constant practice of the church.—In one of his homilies endeavouring to prove the doctrine of original sin, he used their baptism as an argument.—"Baptism (said he) is given to infants for the remission of sins; but wherefore by the use of the church, are they baptized, if they have no need of remission? Are not infants baptized, because that by the sacrament of baptism, the pollution of their first birth may be taken away."—Again, he said, "for this cause the church received a tradition from the apostles to give baptism also to infants." Observe here, there appears in this early age to have been no dispute about the right of infants to baptism; the principle is assumed as universally acknowledged, and applied to prove another doctrine. About fifty years after this, in the third century, a question was proposed by one Fidus, whether baptism ought to be administered, according to the law of circumcision, on the eighth day?" Cyprian of Carthage, convened a council of sixty clergymen, who unanimously decided that there was no necessity to delay baptism until the eighth day, but that it might be performed sooner. Here again, observe, no doubt was expressed concerning the right of infants to baptism; but the only question was, whether baptism ought to be administered on the same day as circumcision had formerly

been. Ambrose another of the primitive fathers declared that the " baptism of infants was the practice of the apostles and of the primitive church until his time." In the writings of Gregory Nazianzen is found this sentence, " Baptism, in like manner as circumcision, may be performed on the eighth day ; but should not be neglected longer than the second or third year." The learned and pious Augustine of the fifth century, in his writings against the Donatists said, " If any ask me for the divine authority of infant baptism, though it is that which the whole church uses, and which was not instituted by a council, but was always in use, he is answered, it is believed to be none other than that which was delivered by the apostles. Nevertheless we may justly estimate how much infant baptism profits from the circumcision which God's ancient people received." The last instance which I shall mention is from the same Augustine in his controversy with Pelagius who denied the doctrine of original sin, and taught that infants were born free of corruption. Augustine opposed this error of Pelagius, and used the baptism of infants, as an argument to refute it. " Infants (said he) are by all christians acknowledged to need baptism, which must be for original sin, seeing that they can have no other." And in another place, " Wherefore are they washed with the laver of regeneration, if they have no pollution?" Though Pelagius felt the weight of this argument, and was much confounded with it, yet he did not dare to suggest a doubt about the right of infants to baptism. But when some charged him with a denial of infant baptism, as a consequence of his doctrine, he denied the charge, and answered, " Men calumniate me with a denial of infant baptism," and added, "I have never heard infant baptism denied by the worst heretics." Pelagius was a scholar and a great traveller. He had come from Britain, and had travelled to Rome, Africa, Egypt, and Jerusalem, and yet he had never heard any one deny infant baptism ; and he himself dared not deny it though it operated so much against his favorite doctrine.

These testimonies teach that the baptism of infants was universally held by the church from directly after the apostles' days, for many hundred years, and how can we account for this, except we admit, that the primitive church received it from the apostles ?

Permit me before I close, to mention one other consideration. Baptism is essential to a visible standing in the church of Christ on earth. By far the greater part of those who profess to belong to the church of Christ have received baptism in their infancy. If this be no baptism, of course, they do not belong to the visible church of Christ. And accordingly we find, that the most of those who deny infant baptism, will not suffer them, however exemplary their lives may be, to commune with them. I ask is it probable that God would show his approbation, as he has done, of so many who have been baptized in infancy, if they were aliens from the commonwealth of the christian Israel, and visible strangers from the covenants of promise? Is it probable that such men as Luther, and Melancthon, and Zuinglius, and Calvin, who put their lives in their hands, and were the honored instruments of the glorious reformation from Popery, were no ministers of Christ? And did not even belong to his visible church on earth? Were Cranmer, and Hooper, and Ridley, and Latimer, and Rogers, and a great many others, who preached the gospel with success, and became martyrs, in the cause of Christ—were these men no ministers of Christ? Nor even members of his visible church? Was Whitefield, whom the Lord so signally blessed, and who probably has more seals of his ministry, and more crowns of rejoicing in heaven than any man since the days of the apostles—was he no minister of Christ? Nor even a member of his visible church? Was the same the case with Owen, and Baxter, and Flavel, and Watts and Doddridge, and Newton, and Edwards and Dickinson, and Davies, and the Tennents, and thousands of others who shone as lights in the world, who walked humbly with God, adorning the religion of Jesus, who enjoyed the presence of God, and whose labours, the Lord blessed to the conversion and edification of an almost innumerable multitude? It cannot be, God would not have so signally and extensively blessed men, and societies holding and practising infant baptism, if they were wrong, and especially on an article essentially affecting the visibility of his church on earth.

I conclude this discourse with summing up the reasoning which has been used in this and the former discourse, on the subject of infant baptism. The covenant made

with Abraham was the covenant of grace. This was proved by the comments of the New Testament upon the articles of that covenant, which show that the promise of a numerous seed related to believers in Christ of every nation; that the gospel was preached and Christ promised in that covenant; that God therein promised to be the everlasting God of those who kept it; that Christ and salvation were the substance of it; that believers under the New Testament are heirs of the promises made in that covenant; that it was confirmed of God in Christ; and that it contained the righteousness of faith. Circumcision was the sign and seal of this covenant. This sign and seal was, by divine appointment, put upon infants only eight days old; and therefore infants once had a right to the initiating seal of the covenant of grace, and had a visible standing in this covenant. Circumcision was abolished when Christ came, and baptism was instituted in its room, and therefore should be applied to the same subjects, unless God has taken away the right which he once gave. The New Testament gives us no evidence that God has taken away this right from infants, and therefore it still continues. Yea the New Testament, not only gives us no evidence that God has taken away the right of infants to be admitted to a visible standing in his church, but it contains positive evidence that he has continued this right.—Christ said "Suffer little children and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Peter urged as a reason why the Jews should be baptized, "The promise is unto you, and to your children." Paul declared the infants of believers to be holy; and whole households were baptized. Infant baptism was practised without dispute throughout the christian church for many centuries after the apostles' days. And God has most signally blessed those who have practised infant baptism, and does still bless them. From these arguments we confidently draw the conclusion that children ought to be baptized. And in this faith, supported by such arguments, we will with joy bring our children to the Lord, put his seal upon them, devote them to him, and humbly plead the promise, that he will be the God of our seed as well as our God.—AMEN.

SERMON C.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR BAPTISM.

ACTS II. 38, 39.

"Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Agreeably to the promise of our divine Lord, the Holy Ghost was poured out upon his apostles, a few days after his ascension. This took place on the day of Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem, where the apostles were assembled, waiting for the fulfilment of their Lord's promise. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance;" Acts ii. 2, 3, 4.

The news of what had taken place, being noised abroad through Jerusalem, drew together a great multitude of Jews, who were at this time in Jerusalem, attending the feast from the different nations, whither they had been dispersed. When they heard the apostles address them each in his own language, some were amazed, and others mocking said, these men are full of new wine;" vers. 13. This charge, Peter, standing up with the rest of the apostles, denied, and told them that what they saw and heard, was the fulfilment of a prophecy long before delivered by the prophet Joel. He then spake to them of Christ, who had been approved of God among them, by the miracles which he wrought; charged them with his murder; declared that God had raised him from the dead, of which they were witnesses; and had exalted him to his right

hand; and that it was through his power that what they saw and heard had taken place. When they heard this discourse, they were pricked in their hearts, and anxiously asked what they should do? "Peter (in the words of our text) said unto them, repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

The christian dispensation of the covenant of grace had now taken the place of the Jewish. Baptism had been appointed to be in the room of circumcision, the ordinance of admission into a visible standing in the church. Visible repentance was to be necessary to admit adults to this ordinance. Children, as formerly, were to have a visible standing in the church, and therefore were to be baptized; for the promise was unto them as well as to their parents. But repentance in the parents being necessary to their own admission, was of course necessary to the admission of their children, whose right was in virtue of their parents standing. And admission into the church was not now to be confined as it had formerly been to the Jewish nation, but was to be extended also to the Gentiles, or those afar off; and they and their children, were also on their repentance to be admitted to baptism.

Waving other things of which the text might lead us to speak, the object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of the *qualifications for baptism.*

I. Let us attend to the qualifications requisite to entitle persons to receive baptism in *adult* years. The direction of our text with respect to such is, repent and be baptized. By the repentance here required is meant true, evangelical repentance; for it is that which is connected with remission of sins. "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." This repentance is a gracious exercise, and he that has it, is a child of God. Hence we learn that the qualifications for baptism in adult years, in the sight of the church are, evidences of true religion. And ministers following the instructions of God's word, and the practice of the apostles, have no right to baptize any in adult years, but upon credible evidences that they possess

true religion. This appears, not only from our text, but from several other passages. Our Saviour commissioned his apostles: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved;" Mark xvi. 15, 16. Hence we learn that believing or faith, even that faith to which the promise of salvation is made, is to precede adult baptism.

In the chapter which contains our text we read, "they that *gladly received* his word were baptized;" ver. 41. The trait of character here given belongs to a gracious heart. Acts viii. 12, we read, "When they *believed* Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." Here again faith preceded baptism. In the same chapter, we have recorded, "As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, see here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said if thou *believest with all thine heart* thou mayest; ver. 36, 37. The eunuch was required to believe with all his heart, which certainly can signify nothing short of saving faith. So also Lydia before she was baptized, gave evidence of conversion; for the Lord had "opened her heart, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul," and immediately after her baptism, she said, "if ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there. And she constrained us;" Acts xvi. 14, 15. So also the jailer was baptized on the same ground; for he was deeply convicted of his sins; and having anxiously enquired what he should do to be saved, was told to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ and he should be saved; and having heard the word of the Lord preached to him, he was baptized, and rejoiced *believing* in God; Acts xvi.

From all these passages it is evident, that credible evidences of conversion, repentance, and faith, or true religion, are requisite to entitle unbaptized adults to be admitted to the ordinance of baptism. And this is the doctrine of our Catechism. "*Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him.*" Herein we agree with those who deny the propriety of infant baptism. We hold with them the necessity of a credible profession of true repentance, faith, and obedience, to give an adult a right to be baptized?

II. We proceed to point out the requisite qualifications for *infant baptism.* These qualifications must be in the parent or offerer. Infants, unquestionably, have not the right merely because they are infants. The advocates for the greatest laxness in administering baptism to infants will not contend for this. They will all allow that something else is requisite to give a right to infants, than merely that they are infants. They must be the children of parents, or under the care of guardians, or masters, of a certain description. Under the Jewish dispensation, it was necessary that persons themselves should be circumcised, to have a right to put the seal of the covenant upon their children. The apostles evidently acted upon the same principle in the administration of baptism. Both Lydia and the jailer were first baptized themselves, and received into the christian church, before the ordinance was administered to their households. And those who in the present day are most lax in administering baptism to infants, will at least require, that the offerer should be a baptized person. These two things then are evident, and must be admitted, that all infants indiscriminately are not to be baptized, and that the qualifications are not in the infant but in the offerer.

What then are the requisite qualifications to entitle a person to offer a child in baptism?

I answer that the offerer ought to give credible evidences that he is truly pious, or a child of God. The correctness of this answer, I would now endeavour to establish?

1. From the qualifications requisite to dedicate a child aright in circumcision, under the Old Testament dispensation. It was shown in a former discourse that the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace, and that circumcision was a seal of this covenant, and therefore a seal of the covenant of grace. The child in circumcision was passive. The acting person was the parent or offerer. As has been shown the child's right was not in itself, but derived from the relation of the parent or offerer to the covenant. The parent therefore by offering his child, evidently professed to be in the covenant, in virtue of which he claimed a right for his child; and, if in the covenant, to be under obligations to keep it. Circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith, therefore when

he applied this seal to his child, he acknowledged his own circumcision, and virtually professed that faith, which interests the soul in a righteousness through which justification is obtained. Hence it appears that parents in the Old Testament church, when they offered a child in circumcision, did acknowledge their own circumcision, and profess to be in the covenant of which circumcision was the seal, and therefore in the covenant of grace; or in other words they did profess true religion, and their obligation to perform all the duties of God's people. And if they professed what they did not possess, they acted hypocritically; and if they did not keep the covenant according to the obligations under which they impliedly and voluntarily brought themselves, they were guilty of lying unto God.

It is true, many who had no real religion circumcised their children; and in some ages of the church, many who were very wicked did it; for it is not denied, that the Israelites in general, whatever their character was, circumcised their children. But the *practice* of the Jewish church, was no evidence that it was right according to the divine institution to circumcise their children with such tempers, and while living as they did, any more than the practice of thousands in the christian church of coming even to the Lord's table, while destitute of heart religion and grossly flagitious in their lives, proves that it is right for such persons to come to this holy ordinance. It is true God required all the Israelites to circumcise their children; but at the same time he required them to do it with proper tempers, and to keep the covenant; and it was at their peril if they did not.

If we look through the Old Testament we shall find abundant proof that the Lord required of the Jews, real heart religion; that they were bound, as the visible covenant people of God, by circumcision to have and to exercise this religion; and that the promises were made to them on this condition. Of Abraham God required, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect; Gen. xvii. 1. At Sinai the Lord said unto the Israelites, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." And the people did engage thus to act; for they replied, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do;" Exod. xix. 5, 8.

Again we find enjoined upon them, "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy;" Lev. xix. 2. "Sanctify yourselves, and be ye holy, for I am the Lord your God;" Lev. xx. 7. "And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good;" Deut. x. 12, 13. "And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul; that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments; then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you;" Deut. xi. 13, 14, 22, 23. From these texts and a great many others, it is evident that God required real heart religion of the Jews; that they did not keep the covenant, of which their circumcision was the seal, without it; and and that they were not, without it, entitled even to temporal blessings.

Further, we find the Lord charged this people with hypocrisy, for professedly owning his covenant, when their hearts were not right with him. Thus we read; "They did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant;" Ps. lxxviii. 36, 37. In the first chapter of Isaiah the Lord blamed this people for attending to external ordinances, in a formal and hypocritical manner. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them." This severe reproof will

apply equally to circumcision with other external ordinances. Again, Ps. L. 16, we read, "Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Now every time a Jew circumcised a child, he declared God's statutes, and took his covenant in his mouth; but in this text we are taught, if he was wicked, he had no right to do this. From the preceding texts, the following things appear. God required of the Jews, real heart religion; they professed this, and bound themselves to live accordingly, when they circumcised their children; when they owned the covenant, by circumcising their children, while destitute of heart religion, the Lord charged them with hypocrisy, and lying unto him; that such offerings were iniquity, hateful to his soul and a trouble to him; and that the wicked had nothing to do with his covenant, and consequently with circumcision the seal of it.

And in addition to all this, it is certain, that for not having what they professed to have when they circumcised their children, and not keeping the covenant of which circumcision was the seal, the Lord at different times very severely punished them. For their unbelief the generation which came out of Egypt were not permitted to enter Canaan. Notwithstanding they were circumcised, they could not enter in, because of unbelief. For their wickedness in breaking the covenant of God, they were frequently harassed by their enemies. For this they were sent into a seventy years captivity in Babylon. And for this notwithstanding their circumcision, they were finally cut off from the church of God, and the uncircumcised Gentiles graffed in. And they were not only cut off from the church; but their city and temple were destroyed, and they themselves were dispersed through the world, and continue to this day, a standing monument of God's wrath against those who take his covenant upon them, while their hearts are far from him.

Hence it appears, that although the Jews did circumcise their children, with unholy hearts, and while their lives were openly wicked, they acted, in so doing, contrary to the divine command; and that God disapproved of such conduct, and did severely punish them for it. The circumcision of his child by a Jew, was not an acceptable act in the sight of God, unless he did it in the exercise of piety of heart.

Here a question may arise. Although it was a wicked act in the sight of God for a Jew to circumcise his child without piety of heart, this was between God and himself; but he being a circumcised person, had the church any right to refuse him admission to this privilege for his child, whatever his life might have been? I answer, yes. And they not only had a right, but it was their duty to refuse him in certain cases.

It was the duty of those who were appointed to instruct the people, to teach them the nature of God's ordinances, with what tempers they were to approach them, the obligations under which they laid themselves, and the sin of coming with wrong tempers, and not fulfilling their obligations; and they ought solemnly to have warned them against such an improper approach to circumcision. This most probably would have prevented many abuses of this ordinance.

Besides, the Lord established discipline in the Jewish church. They were a great many times directed to *cut off* from the congregation of Israel or the Jewish church, certain characters. The least which could be meant by this cutting off was, an exclusion from the Jewish church. And therefore when they were cut off, they were considered and treated as Heathen, and of course could not be admitted to the sealing ordinances of God's covenant, and consequently had no more right to have their children circumcised than the Heathen. Let us then attend to the directions of God on this subject. Ex. xii. 15, 19. the Lord gave commandment to cut off from the congregation of Israel the soul, that during the feast of unleavened bread, should eat any thing leavened. Ex. xxx. 33, 38, they were commanded to cut off from his people the man who should make any oil like the holy anointing oil or put any of it upon a stranger. Lev. vii. they were forbidden to eat of the peace-offerings while ceremonially unclean, or to eat the fat or blood under pain of being cut off from Israel. Lev. xviii.; the Lord, after forbidding a number of sins, added vers. 29, "Whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people." Num. ix. 13, we learn that the man who neglected to keep the passover was to be cut off from his people. And Num. xv. 30, we read, "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously, the

same reproacheth the Lord ; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people." Hence it appears that the Jews were liable to be cut off for certain things ; and if we look at these things we shall find that they embraced every thing which proved in the sight of the church, that a man was destitute of piety. We therefore conclude, that if the Jewish church had done its duty, none visibly wicked would have been retained within its pale ; and consequently, according to the constitution of the Jewish church, none but the visibly pious ought to have been admitted to circumcision for their children, and admitting others, as it is true they did, was in violation of the divine institution.

From all that has been said, I now draw the conclusion, that in the Jewish church, when a person offered a child in circumcision, he professed real religion, that the offering was not acceptable to God without real piety ; and that visible piety ought to have been a requisite qualification, in the sight of the church, according to the divine institution. And since the christian church is founded upon the Jewish, and is but a continuation of the same church, under a different dispensation ; and since baptism has come in the room of circumcision, we conclude that a person when he offers his child in baptism does covenant with God and profess true religion ; that if he professes what he has not, he acts hypocritically ; that to offer his child acceptably in the sight of God, he must do it in the exercise of real piety ; and that the requisite qualifications in the sight of the church, ought to be visible evidences of real piety.

I have been the more particular in examining the qualifications for circumcision in the Jewish church, because many may be ready to suppose, that because we prove infant baptism from infant circumcision, that therefore all baptized parents have a right to offer their children, because they suppose that all circumcised parents had this right. But we have seen from examining the divine institution on this subject that they had not. I believe the advocates for laxness in administering baptism will gain nothing in support of their sentiments, by examining the qualifications for circumcision. I am willing to extend baptism, not as far as the Jews did extend circumcision, in

their practice, but as far as they were authorized by the divine institution to extend it.

I must here pause, and God willing, shall resume and finish the subject in another discourse.

SERMON CI.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR BAPTISM.

ACTS II. 38, 39.

"*Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*"

From the reasoning in the last sermon the conclusion was drawn, that under the Old Testament dispensation, visible piety in the parent, was a requisite qualification, when the church did its duty, to give him a right in the sight of the church to offer his child in circumcision. And hence the inference was drawn, that since baptism has come in the room of circumcision, when a person offers a child in baptism, he covenants with God, and professes true religion, and if he professes what he has not, he acts hypocritically; that to offer his child acceptably in the sight of God, he must do it in the exercise of real piety; and that the requisite qualifications in the sight of the church ought to be visible evidences of real piety.

We now proceed to offer other arguments in support of the same position, that a person to have a right to offer his child in baptism, ought to give credible evidences of real piety.

2. As far as we have any supposed examples in Scripture, of infant baptism, they are in favour of this sentiment. The households of Lydia and the jailer were baptized. In both these cases the heads of the families, who

we suppose were the offerers, gave evidences of true religion; and the families were baptized on this ground, that the heads had embraced true religion, and were really pious. The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul, and then she was baptized and her household. And the jailer was convicted, anxiously enquired what he should do; was told to believe and he should be saved, and then was baptized, he and all his straightway, and rejoiced, believing in God.

3. The same may be argued from the nature of baptism. Circumcision was a token of the Abrahamic covenant, which, as has been shown, was the covenant of grace. And it was a seal of the righteousness of faith. Baptism has come in its room, and is therefore a sign and seal of the covenant of grace. It has been shown that the child's right is in virtue of the parent's standing in the covenant. The most lax will at least plead as the reason why they claim baptism for their children, that they themselves have been baptized, and are therefore, visibly, in the covenant. They therefore do acknowledge their own baptism and standing in the covenant, when they present their children for baptism. And by acknowledging their own baptism and standing in the covenant, they do profess to be the Lord's, and to be obligated to fulfil all that is required of those who are in the covenant of grace. And therefore they undoubtedly ought to have true religion, which they profess to have; or they act hypocritically, and are guilty of what the Scriptures call lying unto God. And here will apply that solemn text, Ps. L. 16, 17; "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." To admit to sealing ordinances, the church ought to require visible evidences of what God really requires. For the visible church ought to be, as far as is consistent with human fallibility, what the invisible church really is. But there can reasonably be no question that God requires real piety, to render the act acceptable in his sight; and therefore the church ought to require visible evidences of real piety. Further, if the parent, as has been shown, does really, when he offers his child, make the same covenant with God, as when

an adult offers himself in baptism, what reason can be given why he should not have the same qualifications? But it has been fully shown that unbaptized persons have no right to baptism for themselves, unless they give evidences of true religion. And if the covenant made is the same, why admit persons to make a covenant of true religion, by offering their children, without evidences of piety, when we would not admit them without such evidences, to make the very same covenant, by offering themselves in baptism. Surely if the covenant is the same, the natural inference is, that the same qualifications should be required.

4. The same may be argued from this consideration, that when a person offers a child in baptism he dedicates it unto God. But most assuredly a heart-searching God looks for sincerity of heart, and no dedication can be acceptable to him, where it is not done with sincerity of heart. But the carnal mind is enmity against God;" Rom. viii. 7. And how is it possible for a person with such a mind to make an acceptable dedication? He cannot. It is contrary to the nature of things, and God has told us in his word, "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord;" Prov. xv. 8. Further a person destitute of religion, when he offers his child in baptism, undoubtedly does not exercise a scriptural faith; but the Scriptures expressly teach, "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" Heb. xi. 6. And "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin;" Rom. xiv. 23. The person therefore who pretends to offer a child, while destitute of faith, which is an essential branch of true piety, cannot please God by such an offering, but on the contrary, sins against him. And most assuredly it cannot be that God authorizes such a person to offer his child; or that the church has a right to admit him, when he gives no evidence that he has that faith without which it is impossible to please God.

5. Another argument in favour of the truth of our position may be drawn from this consideration; one great reason why God has appointed that the seal of the covenant should be put upon infants, evidently was, to secure their religious education. When a child is baptized, the church becomes responsible for its religious education, and is bound to attend with paternal solicitude to its

spiritual interests. But the church when it receives a child, must commit it back again to its parents to be educated by them. It therefore concerns the church, when it admits a child into its pale, to have a security that the offerer will train up this child for God; otherwise one great end of baptism, the religious education of the child will be defeated, and the church will be guilty of receiving into its bosom, a child for God, and then suffering it to be trained up for the service of Satan. This being the case the church ought to be careful to receive no children but those for whose religious education they have good security.—And the only sufficient security they can have is the visibly religious character of the parent.

Thus my hearers I have presented before you some arguments to prove that persons ought to have true religion, to offer their children in baptism acceptably in the sight of God; and to give them a right in the sight of the church, they ought to appear to be what God requires they should be, truly pious.

Let us briefly review the arguments which have been used. Under the Old Testament dispensation, visible religion was requisite according to the divine institution, to entitle a person in the sight of the church to offer his child in circumcision, and baptism has come in the room of circumcision. They whose households were baptized, as recorded in the New Testament, gave evidences of piety. Baptism is a seal of the covenant of grace, and they who come to this ordinance, for their children as well as themselves, profess to be in the covenant and therefore to have true religion. Offering a child in baptism is a dedication of it unto God, which, without true religion, a man cannot really or acceptably make. And one great end of baptism is to secure the religious education of the child, for which the church has no security unless the parent has visible religion.

From all these arguments we draw the conclusion, that visible piety is a requisite qualification, to entitle a person in the sight of the church, to offer his child in baptism.

And this has been the opinion of the church generally with but few exceptions. It is as far as I am capable of understanding them, the doctrine of all the Confessions of Faith, which I have been able to examine. And I believe that even most of those ministers, who are considera-

bly lax in their practice, act upon this principle; they hope that the persons they admit to baptism for their children, have religion, or at least they cannot prove that they have not; and thus they baptize their children on the principle for which we are contending.

That the opinion of the Reformed church generally has been, that visible piety is a requisite qualification to entitle a person to offer a child in baptism, I would now endeavour to show, from the Confessions of Faith of several numerous and important branches of this church. In the form of baptism of the Protestant Episcopal church, the sponsors do, "In the name of the child, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh; and promise obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same through life." And in the charge, which the minister gives to the sponsors after the child has been baptized, he tells them, that it is their part and duty, among other things, to provide that the infant may learn all things which a christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health; and may be virtuously brought up to lead a godly and christian life. Is not here a profession of true religion implied? For even if it is not meant that sponsors expressly promise themselves, to renounce the devil and all his works &c; but only that the child shall do this, how can they promise this for the child, but upon the principle, that they, or the parents to whose immediate care it must be committed, will so instruct the child, and set such an example of piety before it, and so pray for it, as under the blessing of God may lead it thus to act? And how can any but a truly pious person give such religious instruction, set such a pious example and so besiege the throne of grace in behalf of a child as to have any reasonable prospect that the Lord will bless his exertions, to the conversion and salvation of the child?

In the Confession of Faith of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands, adopted by the Synod of Dort 1618, and which is the standard of the Reformed Dutch Church in this country, under the head of baptism, we have this sentence, "The infants of *believers*, we believe ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as the children of Israel formerly were circumcised." And a-

gain in the same chapter we read, "Christ shed his blood no less for the washing of the children of the *faithful*, than for adult persons; and therefore *they* ought to receive the sign." Here observe that according to the standards of the Reformed Dutch Church, "infants of believers" and "the children of the faithful," are to be baptized.

In the Confession of Faith adopted by a Synod of the ministers and messengers of the churches of Massachusetts, held in Boston, 1680, under the head of baptism we find this paragraph: "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized, and those only." Here again only the children of *believing* parents are to be baptized.

In the opinions of another Synod held at Boston, 1662, we find this paragraph; "Church members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they *give up themselves* and their *children to the Lord*, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptized."—According to this, they who *give themselves up to the Lord*, are to have their children baptized.

In the Confession of Faith, adopted at Saybrook, 1708, and which contains the system of doctrine, held by the Connecticut churches, under the head of baptism we find the following article; "Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both *believing* parents are to be baptized and those only." Here again they are the infants of *believing* parents only, who are to be baptized.

The next and the last system of doctrine and discipline I shall examine is that of our own church. And here I beg leave to be more particular, as it is the system, we adopt, as agreeable to the word of God. In the Confession of Faith, Chapt. 28. Sect. 4. we read, "Not only those that do actually profess faith in, and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both *believing* parents are to be baptized." In the answer to the 166th question of the Larger Catechism, we have the same doctrine in the following words, viz. "Infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them, professing *faith in Christ, and*

obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant, and to be baptized." From these paragraphs we learn, that none but the children of those who profess faith in Christ and obedience to him are to be baptized. The profession here required is undoubtedly a profession of true religion. For let this same system itself explain what it means by faith in Jesus Christ. What is meant by it we have contained in the answer to the 86th question of the Shorter Catechism. "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel."— It therefore is evident, according to our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, that a person when he offers a child in baptism, professes faith in Christ and obedience to him, or true religion; and that the church ought to admit none, but upon credible evidence that they have true religion. If we examine the 7th chapter of the Directory for the worship of God, entitled, "Of the Administration of baptism," we shall be compelled to come to the same conclusion. There we find that they are the seed of the *faithful* who have a right to this ordinance; and the minister is bound to require the following of the persons offering a child: Viz. "That they teach the child to read the word of God; that they instruct it in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; an excellent summary of which we have in the Confession of Faith of this church, and in the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly, which are to be recommended to them as adopted by this church, for their direction and assistance in the discharge of this important duty; that they pray with and for it; that they set an example of piety and godliness before it, and endeavour by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up their child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." According to this direction, when ministers in our church baptize a child, they are bound to require of the parents, among other things, that they set an example of *piety* and *godliness*, before the child, and by all the means of God's appointment, bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and the persons offering their child are bound to promise this. I ask can any person but a real christian, sincerely make these promises? What do piety and godliness mean? Piety as used by

theological writers, uniformly means true religion, and undoubtedly means the same in this place. The Scriptuures themselves define godliness. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" 1 Tim. iv. 8. Therefore a godly man is one who has the promise of heaven. Certainly therefore, none but a real christian can sincerely promise to set an example of piety and godliness before his child. And it is absurd for a man to promise to set an example of that which he has not himself. And if he has presumption enough to offer to profess that which his life declares he has not, and to promise that which the church has from his present character no reason to expect he will perform, he ought not to be permitted to mock God, and perjure himself. Hence again it appears from the standards of our church, that true religion is professed by a person, when he offers his child in baptism, that if he does not possess it, he acts hypocritically; and that when he refuses to profess it, or if he is willing to profess when his life contradicts such profession, he ought to be refused admission to baptism for his child.

We therefore again draw the conclusion that visible piety is requisite to entitle a person to a right in the sight of the church to offer his child in baptism. This appears to be the doctrine of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testaments; and this is the doctrine of the Confessions of Faith of most, if not all the Reformed churches; and this is the doctrine contained in the standards of the church to which we profess to belong.

And here it may be important to answer the following query, which perhaps has arisen in the minds of some. Seeing that a person by baptism has become a member of the visible church, although, destitute of piety, he may have no right in the sight of God to offer his child, and although he gives the church no evidence of visible piety, yet on what ground, or in what way, can he be kept back from baptism for his child? I answer, let him be seriously and solemnly told the nature of baptism, the profession which he is about to make, and the solemn obligations under which he is about to lay himself. If this were properly done, it would have a great effect in keeping back many improper persons. Further, I would answer,

if the church has a right to keep back baptized persons from the Lord's Supper, for want of qualifications, which is almost universally acknowledged and done, then it has a right to keep them back from baptism for their children, for want of qualifications. Besides, the church has undoubtedly the right of discipline, and for conduct inconsistent with membership, they may suspend or exclude from the church.

I proceed now to make a practical improvement of this subject,

1. We infer from our subject, that the sacraments ought not to be divided. The person who is fit to come to the one is fit to come to the other. They are both seals of the same covenant. When an adult person receives baptism himself, he professes true religion. He makes a covenant with God, and binds himself to live to God as one of his people. He does the same when he offers his child. And he does no more when he comes to the Lord's Supper. How then does it happen that there are so many, who are willing to come to baptism for themselves and their children, and yet are unwilling to come to the Lord's Supper. It must arise from erroneous views of the nature of the ordinances. I do not say brethren, that you ought to come to the Lord's table before you bring your children to baptism; but I do say with confidence that you ought to have the same qualifications to offer your children in baptism as to come to the Lord's table; and that having given up yourselves to God in offering your children, you ought to embrace the first opportunity to come to the other sacrament. And since the practice of the Jewish church, in admitting every one, as they suppose, to circumcision for their children is so often brought as favorable to the sentiment of those, who wish to offer their children in baptism, while they neglect the Lord's Supper, I would here remark, there was no separating the sacraments in the Jewish. The Lord's Supper is allowed to have come in the room of the passover. Now it is certain that the Jew who neglected to keep the passover was liable not only to be deprived of the right of coming to circumcision for his child, but also to be cut off from the church and all its privileges. Read Num. ix. 13; "But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbeareth to keep the

passover, even the same soul shall be *cut off* from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin."

2. Our subject solemnly reproves many, who have had their children baptized. All such have solemnly acknowledged their own baptism with all the consequent obligations. They have solemnly professed to be in covenant with God, and have bound themselves to live a life of real piety. All this is implied in the act of offering children in baptism. Did you *sincerely* covenant with God when you had your children baptized? If not, you acted hypocritically, and mocked God. And was not this great wickedness. Let such be convinced of their guilt, be alarmed under a sense of it, and without delay seek the forgiveness and mercy of that God, against whom they have thus sinned. Did you suppose at the time you were sincere, but have you not kept your covenant engagements? You are covenant-breakers, and have reason again to be convinced, and alarmed, and importunately to seek the forgiveness of God. And here let me remind all parents who have offered their children in baptism, of the solemn vows they have made with respect to them. Whether you have explicitly promised or not, the promises are implied. But I suppose that most of you have made explicit promises, in the words, or the substance, of the direction in our Confession of Faith. This has been the case with all whose children the speaker has baptized. Have you my hearers whether communicants or not? I ask you as in the presence of God who will soon be your judge—have you kept your engagements, which you have solemnly made to God, and his church? You promised to teach your children to read the word of God. Have you done this? have you put the Bible into their hands? have you recommended this book to them? and do you frequently read it yourselves before them, that they may be led by your example? You promised to instruct them in the principles of our holy religion. Have you done, and are you still doing this? or do you seldom or never speak to them of divine things? or what is worse, do you teach them to neglect and despise such instruction? You promised to pray with and for your children. Have you done, and are you doing this daily? or have you seldom or never offered up a prayer

for your children? Have they never seen you collect that family which God has given you, and in the midst of them pray unto him? You promised to set an example of piety and godliness before your children. Have you done, and are you daily doing this? or is your example the reverse of this? And you promised by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Have you fulfilled this promise? These means are many, such as instruction, example, restraint, correction, prayer, and attendance upon the word and ordinances of God. Brethren, these questions are addressed to your consciences. What does conscience say? Have you not fulfilled your solemn vows? Think of the day of account, when the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. And may the Lord give you deep conviction and repentance.

3. Finally, permit me to say a word to those who have not offered their children in baptism. They may perhaps be blessing themselves that they are clear of guilt in this matter. It is true, you are not guilty of breaking covenant engagements; but still you are guilty of neglecting your duty. It is your duty to offer your children and to give up both yourselves and them unto God, and to do it in the exercise of real faith and repentance. Faith and repentance are immediate duties of every soul. And it is at the peril of the loss of your souls, if you do not repent and believe. And repenting and believing, it is your duty, immediately to give up yourselves, and your children, to God in a public covenant. So that you as well as those who are covenant-breakers, are in a dangerous state. "Repent" therefore "and be baptized, every one of you" who are unbaptized, "in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." Let all who are baptized bring their children to the ordinance, in the exercise of faith, repentance, and holy obedience. And let all who offer themselves or their children, feel that they have covenanted to be the Lord's and his alone, and be careful to fulfil their covenant engagements.

SERMON CII.

ADVANTAGES OF INFANT BAPTISM.

ROMANS III. 1, 2.

"*What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*"

In the preceding chapter, the apostle had shown that without internal piety, the Jew, notwithstanding all his peculiar privileges, could not be saved; and that the pious Gentile, though destitute of the external privileges of the Jew, would obtain salvation. The Jews boasted of their privileges; and many of them, in the apostles days, trusted to them; supposing, because they were the children of Abraham, had the law and ordinances of God, and had been, as a nation, the subjects of the divine favour, that therefore they were safe. And at the same time they supposed that the Gentiles, being destitute of such external marks of the divine favour, were rejected of God, and would not be accepted by him.

This opinion the apostle refuted by the following reasoning. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall, not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God;" Rom. ii. 25—29.

From this reasoning the Apostle supposed an inference might be drawn against the Jewish privileges. This objection he stated, and answered in our text. As though

he had said, if this statement be correct, you may ask, "What advantage then hath the Jew? Or what profit is there of circumcision?" I answer, "Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God." Though circumcision could not save them in their sins, or by its own efficacy, yet it secured to them many and great advantages for obtaining salvation; and especially it secured to them the advantage of having committed to them the Holy Scriptures, which were able, through the blessing of God, to make them wise unto salvation.

We have in a former discourse seen that baptism under the New Testament dispensation has come in the room of circumcision under the Old, and signifies the same things, and should be applied to the same subjects, and therefore to infants. We may therefore answer the question which is sometimes put, "What profit is there of" infant baptism? in the same way as the question was answered in our text with regard to circumcision, "Much every way; chiefly because that unto them" are "committed the oracles of God."

The object of the ensuing discourse is to point out the *advantages of infant baptism.*

Baptism cannot of itself confer any grace. It is not regeneration. It does not operate as a kind of spell or charm as many seem practically to suppose. We may say of it as the apostle in our context said of circumcision. "Circumcision verily profiteth if thou keep the law, but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. The chief benefit of baptism consists in the more favourable situation into which it brings the child to obtain the grace of God; and will profit him, if these privileges are improved, and not otherwise. More particularly,

1. By baptism a child becomes *interested in the promise* of God, "*I will be their God;*" Gen. xvii. 8. This was the great promise made to the circumcised in the Abrahamic covenant, as you will find, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee; and I will be their God." This promise was made to the circumcised; and to be interested in it, it was necessary

that the males should be circumcised. For it is added; "This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; every man-child among you shall be circumcised;" vers. 10. "And my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant;" vers. 11. And it is further added, "The uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people: he hath broken my covenant;" vers. 14.

Under the New Testament dispensation, baptism which has come in the room of circumcision, introduces the child to an interest in the same promise. For from the New Testament we learn, that Abraham is "the father of all them that believe; Rom. iv. 11; that the blessing of Abraham has come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ;" Gal. iii. 14; that they who are "Christ's are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" Gal. iii. 29; and that the promise is still to God's covenant people, and to their children; Acts ii. 39. Hence we infer that the promise, "I will be their God," is still in force. And reasoning from circumcision to baptism, children to be interested in this promise, must have the token of the covenant, which is now baptism, put upon them.

They who have not this sign of the covenant upon them, can be no more interested in the promises of the covenant, than was the uncircumcised man-child of old, who was expressly called a breaker of the covenant of God. Since therefore this promise is in full force, and baptism introduces to an interest in it; it will be important in pointing out the advantages of baptism to inquire into the import of this promise made to the baptized, "I will be their God."

This promise under the Old Testament was a very great one, and imported very great blessings.

It certainly, however, did not imply that every circumcised child should be made a partaker of the saving grace of God. For there undoubtedly were many of the circumcised Jews, who lived and died strangers to a circumcision of heart, or vital piety. But the least that it imported was, that God would keep up his church among those who had the token of the covenant, or circumcision, until Christ should come; that unto them as a body would he give his revealed word, and all the means of grace

with which the Jews were favoured. And accordingly we do find, that notwithstanding the wickedness of the Jews as a nation, God would not forsake them, but continued to be their God, and to grant unto them the means of grace; while he left the other nations to walk in their own ways. When the Jews as a nation, wandered from God and rebelled against him, he would not give them up, but dealt with them by mercies and judgments, to bring them to a sense of their duty. And he frequently gave as the reason why he would not give them up in their most degenerate days, the covenant which he had made, of which circumcision was the sign and seal. And this promise implied further, that God would keep up a spiritual believing people among them, who should be heirs of everlasting life. And accordingly we have reason to believe there were more pious persons among the small nation of the Jews, than all the rest of the world.

Of the same import is this promise, "I will be their God," to the baptized. God has engaged to them as a collective body, that he will keep up his church among them; that unto them shall be committed the oracles of God, and the means of instruction and grace; and moreover that a spiritual believing seed shall be kept up among them; and that, although God, in a sovereign way, may sometimes bestow his saving grace upon some who are visible aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, or who have not been baptized, yet the great proportion of his real people shall be taken from among those who have the token of his covenant upon them, or have been baptized. In short this promise imports, that as unto the circumcised of old, so now unto the baptized in a collective capacity, shall pertain "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the service of God, and the promises;" Rom. ix. 4.

These are the least blessings which the promise, "I will be their God, imports;" and these are very great and important blessings. And it is far more probable that persons interested in this promise, as all the baptized are, will partake of the saving grace of God, than they who are not.

But it is highly probable that this promise. "I will be the God of your seed" in visible covenant, means something more and still greater, viz.: that in case of the faith-

fulness of the parent, the seed in visible covenant, shall be made partakers of the grace of God, or that God will be their God in the highest sense, even their everlasting God. I dare not decidedly assert this; but the sentiment has been advanced with confidence by eminent divines; and the word of God seems to favour it. Of Abraham the Lord said, "I know him that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment;" Gen. xviii. 19. Here was a prediction that Abraham would be faithful; and a promise, that in consequence, his children and household should keep the way of the Lord. Of the same import is the following passage, Jer. xxxii 38, 39; "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." And also the following passages in the prophecy of Isaiah. "I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" Is. LXI. 8, 9. "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them;" Is. LXV. 23. "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses;" Is. XLIV. 3, 4. These texts seem to import, an absolute promise of saving grace to the covenant seed of parents in covenant, on condition of the parents' faithfulness. It is true we see good men have wicked children. But good men like Eli are very often unfaithful in the article of the religious education of their children. But if parents were as faithful as Abraham, we have reason to believe their children, in visible covenant, would sooner or later receive the blessings of divine grace. And if the promise to those children, who have the seal of God's covenant upon them, that God will be their God, imports, that God will sooner or later bestow saving grace upon them, in case parents are faithful, as it probably does, then the baptism of children is of vast importance to them. And if it does not absolutely import this, it imports at least

those great advantages, which we have before shown, viz.: that to that collective body, to which they belong, shall be committed and continued, the oracles of God, and means of instruction and grace; that God will keep up his visible church in the world among them; and that he will also keep up a really pious people among them. So that to be interested in the promise, "I will be their God," is a very great blessing. This is one of the advantages of infant baptism.

2. Another advantage is that it is a *security for the faithfulness of parents*, that they will attend to the religious education of their children. It is true that parents are under obligations arising from the relations they bear to God, to society, and to their children themselves, to train them up in the ways of virtue and piety. But we know that we are slow to learn our duty, and prone to forget and neglect it; and these natural obligations very frequently are not perceived. Of this we have a proof in the opinion held, and frequently expressed and more frequently acted upon, by many parents, that, because they have never brought their children to baptism, nor come under vows, that therefore they are not bound to attend to their religious education. There can be no doubt that dedicating a child to God, and coming under explicit vows, places our duty more distinctly before us, is calculated to make us feel more our duty to the child, and is an additional security for the faithfulness of the parent. And although many parents, who offer their children in baptism, can violate and disregard, not only their natural obligations, but also their explicit vows; yet there can be no doubt, there is more probability that parents will be faithful to their children, when they have solemnly dedicated them to God, and vowed unto him, than when they have not.

3. Another advantage of infant baptism is that it *introduces children to the prayers of the church.* By baptism, children become members of Christ's visible church. They therefore become interested in all the prayers offered up for the church, by the people of God, in every part of the world; and this is certainly a great privilege. And what increases the privilege is, that these prayers are enforced by very great and precious promises, which God has in his word made concerning his church.

4. Another advantage of infant baptism is that the baptized are hereby *introduced to the instructions of the church.* This is one great, and we have reason to believe the chief end, that the great Head of the church had in view, in directing that the seal of the covenant should be put upon children, and they be brought into a visible standing in his church; viz. to secure their religious instruction. By baptism they are placed in the school of Christ. And not only parents, but the church also, which as a mother receives them into her bosom, is bound to attend to their religious instruction. It is the duty of the church by its proper officers, to see that parents do their duty to their baptized children; frequently to remind them of their duty, and exhort them to the performance of it; to see that they bring them to the house of God; that they pray with them and for them; that they set a pious example before them; that they teach them to read God's holy word; that they instruct them in the principles of religion; that they attend to their catechetical instruction, and submit them to be catechised and instructed by the church; and that they use their endeavours to restrain them from vicious courses. And it is the duty of the church by its constituted officers to attend to its baptized children, not only through the medium of the parents, but immediately; frequently to catechise and visit them, and administer instruction according to their capacity to receive it. This would be an incalculable advantage of infant baptism, if the church was faithfully to do its duty.

5. I mention one other advantage of infant baptism, and that is *discipline.* Children by baptism are brought under the watch of the church, and become the subjects of its wholesome discipline. The church by its officers are bound to exercise for the good of the child, a watch over the parents, who offered it; and to admonish, reprove and rebuke them when they prove unfaithful. And when baptized children run into vicious courses, it is the duty of the church to endeavour to restrain or reclaim them, by admonishing, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting, with all long-suffering, tenderness, and anxious solicitude. And I would go further, and express the opinion, that when baptized children grow up in wicked courses, and become confirmed in habits of vice, and after faithful and patient

dealing with by the church, will not be reclaimed, it is the duty of the church to exclude them from their standing in it, and cut them off from membership, in the house of Christ, by the laws of which they obstinately and perseveringly refuse to be governed.

Were the church faithful in this article of discipline, and the last mentioned article of instruction, we would not be so often at a loss to show the advantages of infant baptism. The state of society, we have reason to believe, would be far more moral than it is; our congregations would be far better indoctrinated; and a far greater proportion of our baptized children would become the subjects of divine grace. Then we would see fulfilled that prophecy, "All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed;" Is. LXI. 9. Our baptized children, we have reason to believe, would then, agreeably to another prophecy, "Spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses;" Is. XLIV. 4. And the church would "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners;" Sol. Song. vi. 10.

We shall now conclude this discourse with some inferences from what has been said.

1. Our subject affords an answer to a popular objection against infant baptism; viz. that it can do the child no good, because it is ignorant of it, and is not its own act. The very same objection lay with equal force against circumcision. The child, of eight days old, knew nothing about it; but yet God commanded the child to be circumcised. And this circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith. And to the objector asking what profit is it? The Apostle gave answer, "Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. The same answer may be given to him, who asks, what profit is infant baptism?" Although the child at the time of receiving it be entirely ignorant of the transaction, yet it is calculated to be of great profit to him. He hereby becomes interested in that great promise, "I will be their God." His parents become bound, by explicit engagements made to God and his church, for his religious education, and thus he has an additional security to the obligations arising from nature, that he will be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He

becomes a constituent part of the church of Christ, and obtains an interest in all the prayers that are offered up for the church. And he is put under the instruction and discipline of the church. These are certainly great and precious advantages ; and we may say to those who ask what profit is there of infant baptism ? Much every way.

2. We infer from our subject that they who neglect the baptism of their children, deprive them of an important privilege. Yea, permit me, in faithfulness to add, they neglect a very important duty, and in this respect are guilty before God. Baptism we have shown stands in the place of circumcision. Now, remember that God called a neglect of circumcision a breach of his covenant ; and declared that the uncircumcised man-child should be cut off from his people. Consider also the anger of the Lord against Moses, for neglecting to put the seal of the covenant upon his children. We are told, he met him on his way from Midian to Egypt, in the inn, and sought to kill him. Let those who neglect this ordinance, think seriously on this subject. It is a subject of great importance, both to them and their children. From what has been said we learn, they are neglecting a very important duty, and are depriving their children of very important privileges. They are suffering their children to grow up as visible Heathen, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise.

3. This subject instructs in their duty those who have offered their children to God in baptism. It is your duty to be faithful to the spiritual interests of your children. If you are unfaithful, one great advantage of baptism is defeated. It is your duty often to bear them on your hearts at the throne of grace, and plead their covenant relation; to pray with them, and for them ; to instruct them in the principles of the christian religion ; to restrain them from vice ; to set an example of piety before them ; and to submit them cheerfully to the instructions and watch of the church. Be faithful, and you have great encouragement to hope, that sooner or later, God will pour out his Spirit upon your seed, and make them the subjects of his saving grace.

4. This subject reproves unfaithful parents. And alas! we have reason to fear there are too many such, who get their children baptized out of mere form ; and who not-

withstanding they come under the most solemn obligations to the great God, that they will train up their children in the ways of piety (for these obligations are implied in coming to the ordinance whether explicit promises be made or not) and yet afterwards scarcely think of their engagements, and habitually live in the neglect of their most solemn promises, and even act directly contrary to them; and besides neither consider themselves amenable to the church for their conduct, nor their children subject to its instructions and discipline. With respect to such children our subject teaches, that their baptism can be of little or no service to them. For the great ends of baptism, the instructions and watch of the parents and of the church, are defeated. With respect to such we may say, in the language of the apostle in our context, their circumcision is made uncircumcision. Their baptism profiteth nothing. Yea, this solemn mockery (for it is no better, as the judgment bar will show) will increase the condemnation of those who are guilty of it. Brethren, baptism is a most solemn ordinance; it is a seal of God's holy covenant; and it becomes us to lay hold of this seal with reverence. Offering a child in baptism is a solemn covenanting with a heart-seaching God: and it therefore becomes us to come with great solemnity to this ordinance, and sacredly to keep our vows. And the prostitution of infant baptism is one leading cause, why so many minds are prejudiced against it.

5. From this subject we learn something of the qualifications, the church ought to look for in those who are admitted to baptism for their children. They ought to consider themselves as subject to the instruction, watch, and discipline of the church, and be willing to submit their children to the same; otherwise one great end of baptism is defeated. And they ought to have such a character, as that the church may have ground to believe that the child will be piously educated; for the child must be committed back again by the church to the offerer, to train it up. And if the offerer neglect the pious education of the child, one great end of baptism is defeated.

6. Again, we infer from our subject, that important duties are incumbent on the church. Let those of us my brethren who are officers in this church, be impressed with a sense of our charge. Let us see to it that the blood

of the lambs of this flock is not laid to our charge in the great day of account. Let us study to know our duty. And knowing, let us do it. And may God strengthen us to the performance of it, and add his blessing.

7. Finally, baptized children and youth—remember that you are the lambs of Christ's flock, and subjects of peculiar privileges. Improve these privileges. Cheerfully submit yourselves to the advice, instruction, and watch of the church. Profit by them, and avouch the Lord to be your God. As you have peculiar privileges, if you neglect or despise them, your guilt will be the greater in proportion to your privileges.

SERMON CIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 CORINTHIANS XI. 23, 24, 25, 26.

"*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*"

Many abuses prevailed in the Corinthian church, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. These abuses the apostle notices in our context. The members of this church came together divided among themselves. They convened in a disorderly manner. They waited not one for another; and while some were hungry, others ate and drank to excess and intoxication. For these abuses the apostle severely reproved them; and then to remedy these disorders, he referred them in our text

to the original appointment. This he had received of the Lord, most probably, by immediate revelation; and had faithfully delivered unto them.

The object of the ensuing discourse is to illustrate the *nature* of the *Lord's Supper.*

The doctrine as contained in our Catechism is as follows:

"*The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith made partakers of his body and blood with all his benefits, unto their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.*

This ordinance is called the *Lord's Supper*, because it was first instituted and observed in the evening, at the time of the meal called supper; and because it was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ, and is not of human invention. This we learn from the history of the institution as recorded by the evangelists; and from the testimony of Paul in our text.

It was instituted by Christ at a very *interesting* season, and in peculiarly interesting circumstances. He instituted it in the same night in which he was betrayed by Judas, and entered upon the last scene of those sufferings which he endured for us; and when he knew the dreadful sufferings which were just before him.

It was instituted to be a *sacrament* of the New Testament. In it by sensible signs, spiritual blessings are signified and sealed to the worthy receiver.

It was instituted to be a *perpetual ordinance* in the church of Christ; and is still in force, and will be in force, down to the end of time; for from our text we learn that in this ordinance the disciples of Christ were to show forth his death until his second coming, which will be at the end of the world. "As oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do show the Lord's death till he come."—Besides as it was instituted by Christ, he alone has the right to abrogate it, which he has no where done; and it was observed by the apostles and disciples after his death, and by the primitive church, and by the church in all ages down to the present time. And there is as much need of this ordinance now, as there was at the time it was first instituted. From all which, it is evident, this ordinance is still in full force.

The external *elements* in this sacrament are bread and wine. It has been made a question what kind of bread and what kind of wine, ought to be used. Some have supposed that the bread ought to be unleavened; and it is almost certain that it was first observed with unleavened bread, as it was instituted at the time of the passover, in which no leaven was found in the houses of the Jews. But as it was kept with that kind of bread which they were then using, it is correct for us to do the same, and use that kind of bread which is in common use. As to the wine, some suppose it ought to be red, which colour, best resembles the blood of Christ, which it is intended to represent. But this is also a matter of indifference, as our Saviour gave no directions, and we know not what kind of wine he used, only that it was the fruit of the vine.

The *administration* of the elements should be by *ministers* of the gospel; for to them, as stewards in the house of God, belong the dispensing of his word and ordinances.

The *sacramental actions* on the part of the minister in this ordinance are, setting apart the elements by prayer and the words of institution, breaking the bread, and giving both the bread and the wine to the communicants. Thus our Saviour took the bread, and blessed it, and gave thanks, and gave it to his disciples. He gave them real bread and not wafers, as the Romish church do in this ordinance. After the same manner he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it unto them, directing them to divide it among themselves. And here it may be proper to notice a practice in the Roman Catholic church, of withholding the cup from the laity, in this ordinance, which first became a law in that church, by a decree of the council of Constance, about 100 years before the Reformation. This grew out of their doctrine of transubstantiation. For, supposing after consecration, the bread to be the real body of Christ, and the wine his blood; as flesh contains blood, they hold that both the flesh and blood of Christ are received, by partaking of the consecrated wafer, which they substitute in the place of bread; or rather by partaking of what they say appears to be the wafer. But why the priests receive the cup while it is withheld from the laity, is hard to determine. This withholding the cup from the common people in this ordinance, is without Scriptural warrant; yea in opposition to the

instructions of Scripture. The ordinance was administered in both elements at first. And although it is true they were all ministers who sat at the table, when the ordinance was first instituted; yet as the manner in which the ordinance was at that time observed, was to be an example in succeeding celebrations; and as no direction was then given to make any distinction between clergy and laity, it follows of course that the ministers of Christ, in administering the ordinance, should make no distinction. Besides the apostle in our text, to correct the abuses which had crept into the Corinthian church, refers them to the original institution, to teach them how they ought to keep this ordinance, in which he mentions the cup as to be given and received as well as the bread. And in a following verse, he exhorts, "Let a *man* examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Here the exhortation is given to a *man*—any man, to examine himself; and then not only to eat of that bread, but also to drink of that cup. The minister is to give both the bread and the wine to the communicants, who are to receive them, and to eat the bread and drink the wine.

The *posture* in which the elements should be received, has also been made a question. Some receive them standing, some sitting, and others kneeling. I do not suppose that the posture is at all essential to the ordinance. But we hold sitting to be the best; because this is the table posture, and this was the posture in which the ordinance was first received, when our Lord himself was at the table. It was while sitting at the table, after having eaten the passover, that he instituted this ordinance; and we have in Scripture no precept or example for any other posture.

In this ordinance the bread and wine are only *signs*. The *things signified* are the body and blood of Christ. The bread represents his body which was broken for us; and the wine his blood, which was shed for us. The bread and wine only *represent* the body and blood of Christ, and are not his real body and blood, as has been most absurdly held. The Roman Catholics hold to this opinion. They suppose, that after the words of consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are changed into the real body and blood of Christ; that although

the appearance of bread and wine remain, there is only the appearance, and not the reality; what appears to be bread, is really the body of Christ, and what appears to be wine, is really the blood of Christ. This doctrine is called *transubstantiation*. It was once, previous to the Reformation, for a long time, almost universally received, by what was called the christian church. Volumes have been written to explain and defend it. The elements have been worshipped in consequence. And many have suffered as martyrs, for daring to question the truth of this doctrine. It is founded on a literal understanding of the words of institution, "This is my body." But it is evident there are many expressions in Scripture which must be understood figuratively. Thus Christ is called a stone, a rock, a corner-stone, a way, a door, a vine, and the like; but common sense teaches us that these are figurative expressions; and it equally teaches us that the expression, "This is my body," is not to be understood literally, but figuratively. I need not spend time before this audience, in endeavouring to show the monstrous absurdity of this doctrine. It denies the testimony of our senses; it contradicts reason and common sense, and involves the most palpable absurdities. And besides we may observe, that in our text, the apostle speaks of the bread and wine, after the consecration; "For as often as ye eat this *bread*, and drink this *cup*, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

After the commencement of the Reformation, another doctrine called *consubstantiation*, was broached on this subject by Martin Luther. He held and taught, that although the bread and wine are not, by the form of consecration, turned into the body and blood of Christ, nevertheless the body and blood of Christ are present in, with, and under the elements of bread and wine in this ordinance, and received with them. But this doctrine is liable to almost all the objections of the former, and is almost equally absurd. It occasioned much disputing among the Reformers, was a great hindrance to the progress of the Reformation, and finally caused a separation between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches.

In opposition to both these errors of transubstantiation, and consubstantiation, we believe that Christ is not corporally present in this ordinance, nor received in a corpo-

ral manner, but nevertheless that he is spiritually present; and that the worthy receivers do by faith feed upon his body and blood, or receive and apply the benefits of his broken body and shed blood, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

We proceed to illustrate the *design* of this ordinance or the *ends* for which it was instituted.

1. It was instituted to be a *memorial* of Christ. This design of the institution we have contained in our text, in the following words, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. This cup is the New Testament in my blood: this do ye as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." We have the same design of the institution, contained in the account which the evangelists have given us. This ordinance was instituted to be a standing evidence in the world, of Christ's sufferings and death until his second coming. And it has greatly tended to keep alive the memory of these events. And it was especially intended to recall to the memory of the people of Christ, and impress their minds with a lively sense of his love, his sufferings, and his death. He knew how much we are affected, in our present state, by sensible objects; and how prone his disciples would be to forget him; and therefore he instituted this ordinance to recall his love, sufferings, and death, forcibly to their remembrance. And the signs which he chose, are aptly fitted to do this. The bread which has been threshed, ground, crushed beneath the millstone, and which is broken in the ordinance, affords a significant emblem of the bruising and breaking of his body for us; and the wine, which has been violently pressed from the grape, and which is poured out into the cup, gives a lively representation of the shedding and pouring out of his blood.

2. This ordinance was instituted to be a *seal* of the covenant of grace. This design of the ordinance we are taught in the words of institution. "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." That is, it is a sign and seal of the New Testament, or covenant of grace founded in the blood of Christ. The Lord's Supper is a standing evidence of the reality of the covenant of grace; and it seals to the worthy communicant, all the blessings of the cove-

nant; and the communicant, by partaking of this ordinance, voluntarily engages and binds himself to perform all that this covenant requires. God on his part engages to the worthy receiver, and by this ordinance seals the engagement, that he will be his God; that he will bestow upon him all the blessings of salvation which Christ purchased by his death; that he hath for the sake of Christ forgiven all his sins, and accepted him as righteous in his sight; that he will, through sanctification of the Spirit, make him meet for glory; that he will keep him by his mighty power through faith unto salvation; and that he will finally bestow upon him everlasting life. And the communicant, on his part, engages to be the Lord's. He publicly assents to the articles of the covenant, and binds himself to the performance of the duties therein required. He professes that the death of Christ is the foundation of all his hopes. He professes faith in him, and repentance of all his sins. He declares that he has renounced, and that he forever will renounce, the service of sin and Satan. And he engages that he will deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ, and live devoted to him, in the performance of all the duties which he hath required, and abstaining from the sins which he forbids. By coming to this ordinance he takes an oath of allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Captain of his salvation. The proper meaning of the word sacrament is a military oath. The partaker of this ordinance does by this act swear allegiance to Christ, and solemnly binds himself to fight under his banners, against the world, the flesh and the devil, and yield up his life rather than renounce his service.

3. This ordinance was instituted to be an ordinance in which for the saints to hold *communion* together; and hence it is styled the communion. This design of the ordinance we have contained in the following declaration of the apostle to the Corinthians: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ; the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ; and we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." In this view of the ordinance, it was designed to cultivate brotherly love; to teach christians that they are one family, and that therefore they ought to be of one mind, and to live together as brethren.

Thus I have pointed out the design of the ordinance; and from the design we may learn its *use*.

It is of use to hold up to the view of the world, the death of Christ; and thus to leave those who neglect or despise the salvation which he purchased by his death, the more inexcusable. It is of use to call forcibly and frequently to the remembrance of the people of Christ, his love, sufferings, and death; and in a peculiarly lively manner to impress a sense of these upon their minds. And such a sense of these as this ordinance is calculated to produce, will have a tendency to warm our own souls with love to Christ; to raise our affections; to enkindle our devotions; to excite our gratitude to Christ; to warm our zeal for the advancement of his cause and glory in the world; to increase our hatred of sin, which was the cause of his death, and which is so offensive to him who has loved us so much; to humble us under a sense of our deserts; to fill us with self-denial, heavenly mindedness, patience, and submission to the will of God, of which, in his death we have such a bright example; to increase our faith in him as a Saviour, having fully satisfied divine justice by his death; and to confirm our hope in the mercy of God through him. For he that spared not his own Son; but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.

As a badge of our christian profession, a seal of the covenant, and an oath of allegiance to Jesus Christ, it is of use to keep up the visible church of Christ, in the world, and keep his people separate from the world; it is of use to strengthen their faith and hope in the promises of the covenant, of which they have received the pledge and seal; and thus greatly to increase their faith; and it is of use to place their duty frequently and more distinctly before them. It brings them under voluntary and public covenant-engagements, and frequently reminds them of these engagements, and thus has a natural tendency, to make those who come to it aright, more watchful, more prayerful, more penitent, more fearful of sin, more self-denying, more obedient, and in short, more holy in every respect; and thus is of great use, as a means in the hands of the divine Spirit, to carry on the work of sanctification, and ripen the soul for glory.

Again, as the communion of saints, this ordinance is

of use to promote a spirit of brotherly love; to keep down all angry passions; to teach and impress upon the mind the duty of forgiveness of injuries; and thus to prepare the soul for the communion of saints in heaven, where every angry and discordant passion shall be banished, and universal and perfect love prevail.

Thus in this ordinance, while the worthy communicant partakes of the external emblems of bread and wine, his soul may by faith be made a partaker of the body and blood of Christ, or of the benefits of his death, to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. I conclude this discourse with a few observations, suggested by what has been said. This discourse reproves those who neglect the ordinance of the Supper. Has the Son of God become incarnate, and did he suffer and die to purchase salvation for sinners? and did he, just before he left the world, institute this ordinance to be a memorial of his love and sufferings for us? What ingratitude to neglect it! and how criminal must such neglect be, after so much love! Does God in this ordinance present his covenant, sealed and ratified on his part, and call upon you to set your seal to it? How criminal to despise or neglect this covenant, or refuse to own it! Be assured that this ordinance will increase your condemnation, if you continue to neglect it.

Again, this discourse reproves those who come to this ordinance with improper tempers, or who live inconsistently with the covenant-engagements which they here make. Are there not some who come, not to remember Christ; but to answer some selfish ends? Are there not some who pretend to remember him, and yet do not love him? Are there not some who, by coming to this ordinance, call Christ master, and Judas-like say, hail master, and yet betray him by their walk and conversation? Are there not some who by coming to this ordinance take God's covenant into their mouths, and then go away and daily break it? And are there not some who come to this communion of saints, who at the same time indulge themselves in anger, and malice, and evil-speaking, towards their professed brethren? And who even approach the table of the Lord unreconciled to some of their professed brethren, and entertaining an unforgiving temper towards them? Our discourse solemnly reproves

all such; and teaches them that they are wholly disqualified for this ordinance; that they act inconsistently with the design of the institution, and are eating and drinking judgment to themselves.

SERMON CIV.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER.

1 CORINTHIANS XI. 27, 28, 29.

"*Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

Several disorders prevailed in the Corinthian church at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. To rectify these disorders, the apostle in our context, instructed the members of this church, in the nature and design of the institution; informing them, that it was not a common meal, but a sacred ordinance; that the bread and wine were emblematical of the body and blood of Christ; that they were to be received in remembrance of him; and that as often as they received them, they showed forth his death. Hence he inferred in our text, that whosoever received these elements unworthily, would be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. By improperly receiving the elements, persons would show such a carelessness about Christ, and such a want of reverence, respect, and affection for him, or such a contempt of him, as would manifest that they had the temper of those who crucified him, and as would have a tendency to injure his cause; so that they would in a measure be sharers in the guilt of those who wounded his body and shed his blood upon the cross.

This being the case, the apostle therefore exhorted them to a careful self-examination, that they might avoid this guilt, and come to the ordinance prepared to keep it aright. This duty he further enforced in the next verse, by the dreadful consequence of unworthily communicating.

On the last Sabbath, the nature, design, and use, of the Lord's Supper were explained. We proceed now, to consider the *qualifications* to come to this ordinance.

These qualifications are pointed out in our Catechism in the answer to the 97th question:

"*What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?*

It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, and their faith to feed upon him; of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves."

By *worthiness*, in this answer, and in our text, we are not to understand a personal worth or merit, entitling us to come to this ordinance. In this sense, there are none worthy; for none of our sinful race have any merit in the sight of God to entitle them to this or any other privilege; and on this ground every soul must be debarred as unworthy. But by worthiness to partake of this ordinance is meant a *meetness* or *preparedness* for it; that is, possessing those qualifications which the gospel requires. The person who possesses these qualifications, whatever they are, is worthy in the sense in which we are to understand this word, as used in reference to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper; however unworthy he may be in himself, or however unworthy he may feel himself to be, to come to the ordinance.

What then are those qualifications, which the gospel requires, to fit a person to come aright to the holy ordinance of the Supper?

I answer, to entitle a person in the sight of God to come to this ordinance, he ought to have real piety, and have his graces in exercise; and to entitle him in the sight of the church, he ought to give credible evidences of real piety.

That a person ought to have real piety to entitle him in the sight of God, appears from a number of considerations

and a number of passages of Scripture, which might be mentioned and illustrated. I will however at present argue this point, only from the nature of the ordinance, from which it will sufficiently appear that all who come to it ought to have real piety.

In the discourse on the last Sabbath morning, it was shown, that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was instituted to be a memorial of Christ, a seal of the covenant of grace, and the communion of saints. Considered in either of these respects, the nature of the ordinance teaches, that a person ought to have real piety to be entitled in the sight of God to come to this ordinance.

Was the ordinance instituted to be a memorial of Christ, and is it to be observed in remembrance of him? It is certain we cannot do this aright without real piety. For it is self-evident that Christ cannot be remembered aright without love. But without piety there can be no true love to Christ: for the Scriptures teach us that the carnal mind," by which is meant the unrenewed mind, "is enmity against God;" Rom. viii. 7. Hence it is evident that the person who is destitute of piety has no true love to Christ; and most assuredly such a person cannot remember Christ aright; and therefore true piety is necessary to come aright to this ordinance.

Again, was this ordinance instituted to be a seal of the covenant of grace? God seals the blessings of this covenant to none but his real people; therefore none but his real people, have a right to this seal. It is absurd, that any others should pretend to receive it, since it is not given to them by God, and seals nothing to them. On the part of sinners, the articles of the covenant of grace are all summed up in this sentence, that they will be the people of God, which includes all the duties of religion, as faith, repentance, love, and holy obedience. He that is in covenant with God is bound to fulfil the articles thereof; and the Lord's Supper is a seal of his engagement to fulfil these articles. He hereby publicly and solemnly binds himself to be the Lord's and his alone. He professes that Christ is the only foundation of his hope of salvation, and that he believes in him, and by faith takes him as his Saviour; he professes repentance of all his sins; and he binds himself to live to the glory of God, by keeping his commandments. This being the nature of this transac-

tion, most assuredly no person can come to this ordinance aright unless he has true religion. He who has not true piety does not assent to the articles of the covenant, and therefore he must be insincere in setting his seal; and it is absurd for him to set his seal to a covenant, which was never made with him, and to which he does not assent. It is virtually trifling with omniscience and mocking the heart-searching God. In agreement with these observations is that solemn text, Ps. L. 16; "Unto the wicked God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Hence, from a consideration of this ordinance as a seal of the covenant of grace, it appears that true piety is an essential qualification to come aright to the ordinance.

We must come to the same conclusion, if we consider the ordinance as the communion of saints. None but those who are really saints can be fit for, or enjoy this communion. Light and darkness are not more opposite to each other than religion and irreligion, or the temper of a saint and of one who is not pious. It is therefore impossible for one who has not religion to hold christian communion with one who has; and it is absurd for him to come to the Lord's table to hold communion with the people of Christ.

We may observe again, that in this ordinance, not only the people of Christ hold communion with each other; but Christ holds communion with his people. This the apostle intimates in the same passage, in which he teaches that this ordinance is the communion of saints. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. x. 16. He introduced this passage to show that the Corinthians ought not to join with the Heathen in their religious festivals; for as in the Lord's Supper they professed to hold communion with Christ, so by partaking of these idolatrous feasts which were kept in honour of idols, their communion would be with these idols. This being the case, it is certain that none can be fit for this ordinance, unless they are fit to hold communion with Christ. But, "What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16. An unrenewed soul cannot hold communion with Christ; and

therefore, without true piety, a person must be unfit for this ordinance.

From all these considerations we conclude, that true piety is an essential requisite to a right participation of this ordinance. This is children's bread, and none but children have a right in the sight of God to partake of it.

Will it be objected to this conclusion, that there was a Judas at the Lord's Supper, when Christ himself administered it; and that as he knew the hearts of all men, he knew that he was a hypocrite, and not a real disciple; and that therefore if he had intended to make true piety a requisite qualification, he would have debared Judas from this ordinance? To this objection I answer, it is not certain that Judas was at the Lord's Supper. It is certain he sat down with the rest of the apostles to eat the passover; but whether he continued sitting with them until they received the Lord's Supper, or went out before, is doubtful. But admitting that he was at the ordinance with our Lord himself, it proves nothing against the conclusion which has been drawn. For Christ intending by his conduct in the first administration of the ordinance, to set an example to his church in future ages, treated Judas according to his visible character; and he was *visibly* a pious man. We have no evidence that his character previous to this time did not stand as fair as that of any of the disciples. So that the instance of Judas (admitting that he was at the Lord's Supper) proves nothing against the position, that persons to have a right to this ordinance, and to come acceptably in the sight of God, ought to have real piety. It only teaches us, that the church, in receiving persons to this ordinance ought to be guided by their visible character. And it holds up a solemn warning to all hypocrites, who in the end of Judas may see the danger of drawing nigh unto God with their mouths, and honouring him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him.

The qualifications to come to the Lord's Supper, in the sight of the church ought to be visible piety. For the officers in the church, cannot search the heart; but they ought to look for evidence of that which God requires, which has been shown to be real piety. And since they have committed to them by Christ, the keys of the visi-

ble kingdom, with power to open and shut it, it becomes them to examine persons, applying to be received to the Lord's Supper, to enable them to form a judgment whether they possess or not the requisite qualifications.

But it is not enough for those who approach the Lord's table, to be examined by the proper authority in the church, and to be judged by them qualified for this ordinance; they ought also, carefully to examine themselves. Self-examination is at all times an important duty; but more especially as a preparative for the Lord's Supper. The exhortation of the apostle, "examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves;" 2 Cor. xiii. 5, is a duty which is daily binding, and which should daily be performed; but when we are about to approach the Lord's table, we are peculiarly called to this duty: and then our self-examination should be peculiarly strict, as the apostle exhorts in our text, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."

In general, persons ought carefully to examine themselves, whether they are christians. To decide, in some good measure, with satisfaction to themselves, this all-important question, they ought carefully and impartially to compare their character with that of the true christian, as drawn in the word of God; and according as they agree or disagree, draw the conclusion respecting their own character.

The particular points on which they ought especially to examine themselves, we have enumerated in our Catechism, in the answer already cited. These points are, their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, their faith to feed upon him, their repentance, their love, and their new obedience. On each of these points, we ought in our preparation for the Lord's Supper, carefully to examine ourselves: because, they who have these graces are christians, and therefore are habitually prepared for the ordinance; and also because these are the graces which ought more especially to be called into exercise in this ordinance. Let us for a few moments attend more particularly to each of these points.

1. We ought to examine ourselves as to our *knowledge* to discern the Lord's body. This was the great reason which the apostle gave, why the Corinthians were so

guilty in their celebration of the Lord's Supper; they did not discern the Lord's body. They were ignorant of the spiritual signification of the ordinance, and looking upon it as a common meal, they did not through the significant elements of bread and wine, discern the Lord's body thereby signified. They were, neither doctrinally nor experimentally, acquainted with the nature of this ordinance. It becomes us therefore, previous to our coming to the Lord's Supper, to examine ourselves, as to our knowledge of the nature of the ordinance, and labour to obtain correct views on this subject, and to have these views clearly in our minds. In this knowledge we have reason to fear, many communicants are greatly deficient. And it is difficult to conceive, how persons, who are thus ignorant, can derive any benefit from the ordinance. Yea, coming to the ordinance, while totally ignorant of its nature, design and use, is a profanation of it, for which the Corinthians were severely reproved by the apostle. Examine yourselves therefore my brethren as to your knowledge to discern the Lord's body—your knowledge of the nature of the ordinance, the plan of salvation through Christ therein represented, and the manner in which he is to be received and fed upon; and further, examine yourselves, whether you approve of the truths taught in this ordinance. This latter is that experimental knowledge which is necessary to an experimental discernment of the Lord's body, without which, all doctrinal knowledge will be in vain.

2. We ought to examine ourselves as to our *faith* to feed upon Christ. The great use of this ordinance to the christian is, to increase and strengthen his graces. Christ in this ordinance is offered as the food of the soul. Now faith is that grace, by which the soul, in this ordinance, looks through the external signs, and contemplates the things signified, and receives and applies Christ and his benefits. We ought therefore to examine ourselves, whether we have a real, gospel faith; for without this we cannot be christians, nor have any right to this ordinance; and without this we cannot feed spiritually upon Christ, nor receive any benefit in the ordinance. And we ought to examine, not only whether we have a true faith, but also, whether this faith be in lively exercise; and labour to have it in such exercise, that we may be enabled to

feed on Christ, to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

3. We ought in coming to this ordinance, to examine ourselves as to our *repentance*. Repentance also is necessary to the christian character: For "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Luk. xiii. 5. And repentance is a grace, in the exercise of which, the christian ought daily to live, because he daily comes short of his duty and commits sin. But more especially should this grace be exercised at the table of the Lord. For the scene which is here exhibited is intended to fill us with sorrow for sin, with humility under a sense of it, and with a hatred of it, and to excite and strengthen our resolutions against it. We ought therefore to come to the table of the Lord, in the exercise of repentance, and to examine ourselves that we may know, whether we have this essential grace of the christian, and whether it be in lively exercise, and to labour to have it in such exercise, that while by faith we look on him whom we have pierced, we may mourn.

4. We ought to examine ourselves as to our *love*, both to God and the brethren. For love in both these senses, is essential to the christian character, and is a grace which must be exercised in the right reception of this ordinance. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of Christ, and he ought to be remembered with sincere and supreme love. Let us therefore examine ourselves, whether we do truly love Christ; and whether our love be warm, or languid; and labour to have it in lively exercise that we may remember him with raised affections. Further the Lord's Supper is the communion of saints, and is intended to promote brotherly love. We ought therefore to examine ourselves as to our love to the brethren; for without this we cannot be christians, as we read, "he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1. John iv. 20. And if we have that brotherly love, which is essential to the christian character, we will be ready to forgive injuries: for Christ hath told us, expressly, "If ye forgive not men their tresspasses, neither will your Father forgive your tresspasses;" Mat. vi. 15. And further, without this brotherly love and spirit of forgiveness, we cannot be fit for the communion of saints.

5. We ought to examine ourselves as to our *new obedi-*

ence, "If ye love me (said Christ) keep my commandments. If a man love me he will keep my words:" John xiv. 15, 23. "Follow holiness (said an Apostle) without which no man shall see the Lord;" Heb. xii. 14. New obedience is an essential trait of the christian character. Let us therefore examine ourselves, whether we walk habitually in the ways of Christ's commandments; let us be humbled that we live no more to his glory; and let us come to his table resolved to live more entirely devoted to his service.

Thus, I have briefly pointed out, wherein we should examine ourselves previous to our approaching the table of the Lord.

This duty of self-examination is enforced in our text, by most solemn considerations, viz. the guilt and danger of unworthily partaking. The *guilt* we have in the first verse of our text. "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Such persons, as it were, crucify Christ afresh, and are chargeable with a guilt, similar to that of those, who broke his body and shed his blood upon the cross.

The *danger* of unworthily communicating is pointed out in the last verse of our text, in language sufficient to make us examine diligently, and be exceedingly careful how we approach this holy ordinance. "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself." Let us here briefly examine the import of this part of our text. The word here translated *damnation*, signifies judgment and condemnation. It is the same word in the original, in this verse, as in the last verse of this chapter, where it is rendered *condemnation*. The word therefore signifies nothing more than the judgment or condemnation merited by every sin, and which may be averted by repentance. It does not import, as some tender consciences have supposed, that the sin of unworthily communicating is unpardonable, and that persons thereby seal their damnation. For we know that some of those who were guilty of the murder of Christ were afterwards pardoned; and most assuredly the sin of being guilty of the body and blood of Christ in the ordinance, cannot be greater, nor so great, as the sin of shedding his real blood. Besides by the damnation or judg-

ment of which the apostle here spake, we have reason to believe he meant temporal judgments: for he immediately added, "for this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep;" which is generally understood to mean that the Lord had sent sickness and mortality among the Corinthians for their profanations of the Lord's Supper. And further in a following verse we read, "When we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."—By which is evidently meant, that these temporal judgments were sent upon them by the Lord, to bring them to repentance, that they might not be finally condemned, but saved.

But still, although the sin of unworthily receiving the Lord's Supper is not unpardonable, it is a great sin, and will issue in our final and aggravated condemnation and destruction, unless repented of. We ought therefore most carefully to examine ourselves, that we may not be guilty of this sin, or come under this condemnation. And I would further observe that this solemn declaration was not placed here, to deter from this ordinance, the humble soul, who, filled with a sense of his unworthiness, and trembling, lest he may approach in an improper manner, scarcely dare come; but it was intended to deter the presumptuous and profane, and excite all to a careful self-examination.

You have heard, my brethren, who have a right to come to the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, viz. the christian after a careful self-examination. Have you evidences that you are christians, and have you been endeavouring by a careful self-examination to satisfy yourselves on this subject, and to call forth your graces into lively exercise? Come then to the Supper of the Lord. Have you knowledge to discern the Lord's body? Do you understand the nature of this ordinance? Have you an approving knowledge of its spiritual signification? Have you faith to feed upon Christ? Have you repented of all your sins? Do you love Christ, sincerely and supremely? Do you love the brethren? Do you not entertain enmity in your hearts against any? Have you from your hearts forgiven all who have injured you? Are you walking in new obedience? Have you been engaged in endeavouring to

call forth your graces into exercise? Come then to the table of the Lord. This is the memorial of Christ. Do you love him? Come then and do this in remembrance of him. This is the seal of the covenant of grace. Are you willing to have the Lord for your God, and Christ for your Saviour on gospel terms? Are you willing to be the Lord's, and to make an unreserved surrender of yourselves to Christ to be saved and governed by him in his own way? come then, and seal the covenant. This is the communion of saints. Do you love the brethren? Have you forgiven all? Come then to the communion of saints. May the Lord strengthen to come, all whom he invites to this ordinance.—AMEN.

SERMON CV.

PRAYER.

PHILLIPPIANS IV. 6. LAST CLAUSE.

"*In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*"

The duty enjoined in this passage is *prayer*. This is a duty incumbent on all, whatever may be their character or situation in life. This none will pretend to deny, who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God. For it is too frequently and explicitly taught to admit of denial for a moment. And it is also plain from the word of God, that the right performance of this duty is essential to the favour of God; and that a prayerless person must be destitute of the grace of God. But that prayer is a duty incumbent on all, is taught, not only by the word of God, but also by the light of nature. The obligation to the performance of this duty does not rest on a positive command; but it rises out of the relation of creature and Creator; and prayer would be our duty if God had never commanded it. God is the author and upholder of our

being; he is the source of all our blessings; and he holds our lives and destinies in his hand, and can make us happy or miserable. Man is his creature, created, preserved, and supported by him, and entirely in his hands. And if God be such a being, and man such a being, surely reason teaches, that it is the duty of the latter to pray unto the former. Agreeably to this reasoning, we find the duty of prayer to be universally acknowledged by the Heathen, who are guided by the light of nature. Even among the most stupid idolaters, we find them bowing down before their respective deities, and praying unto them, though made of stocks and stones. They, therefore who neglect the duty of prayer, act not only in direct opposition to the plain and repeated instructions of Revelation; but also to those of the light of nature. And most assuredly the Heathen will rise up in the judgment against such and condemn them. And they who deny prayer to be a duty, not only deny the word of God, but act in opposition to the light of nature, and the voice of mankind in all ages and countries.

However prayer may be neglected in our world, it is a duty taught both by revelation and reason; and it is a duty so important, that the man who neglects it, must be destitute of the grace of God, and a saving interest in his favour. As soon as a man begins to be really serious, he will no longer continue prayerless; but with Paul, "Behold he prayeth;" Acts ix. 11. That prayer is essential to the character of a truly pious man, is evident from the general tenor of the Scriptures. The Scripture saints lived in the habitual performance of the duty of prayer. Christ himself whose example his people are to follow, frequently was engaged in prayer. The duty is frequently enjoined, as in the following texts: "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" Luk. xviii. 1. "Watch and pray;" Mat. xxvi. 41. Continuing instant in prayer;" Rom. xii. 12. "Praying always, with all prayer;" Eph. vi. 18. "Pray without ceasing;" 1 Thes. v. 17. And in our text, "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And we find the constitution which God has ordained is, "Ask and it shall be given you—every one that asketh, receiveth;" Mat. vii. 7, 8. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call

upon him, to all that call upon him in truth;" Ps. cxlv. 18. "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you;" Jer. xxix. 12. From all these considerations, it is evident that the performance of the duty of prayer is essential to the character of the pious man.

Every pious person is a praying person. But persons may externally pray, and yet not be pious; for all that appears to be prayer in the sight of man is not really acceptable prayer in the sight of God. Let us therefore attend to an illustration of the *nature of true prayer.*

We have an excellent brief definition of true and acceptable prayer, in our Shorter Catechism, in answer to the 98th question.

"*What is prayer?*

Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God, for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

We shall endeavour in the remainder of this discourse to illustrate the duty of prayer as defined in this answer.

The parts of prayer as taught in this answer, and in the Scriptures generally, are three, viz.: petition, confession, and thanksgiving.

Petition is asking of God, those things which we desire for ourselves, or others. This is the principal part of prayer. That this is a part and a principal part of prayer, there can be no doubt, and needs no proof.

Confession, or an acknowledgment of our sins, is also a part of prayer. Thus we frequently find the saints of old, in their prayers, making confession of their sins unto God. "I acknowledge (said David) my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;" Ps. xxxii. 5. "I acknowledge my transgressions. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight;" Ps. li. 3. 4. "I prayed (said Daniel) unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said—we have sinned—O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee;" Dan. ix. 4, 5, 8.

Again, *thanksgiving*, or an acknowledgment, with gratitude and praise of the mercies of God, is another part of prayer. This is evident from our text, "In all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your re-

quests be made known unto God." And it is frequently taught in other parts of Scripture, both in the exhortations to the duty, and in the examples which we have of the practice of the saints.

"Prayer is an offering up of our desires to *God*." Prayer is to be made to God, and God only. We are not allowed to pray to angels or saints, as the Papists do; but to God only. For prayer is an important part of religious worship; but the Scriptures teach us; "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;" Mat iv. 10. Besides, God only is able to search the heart, and therefore to know the desires of them that pray; he alone is every where present to hear prayer; he alone can pardon sin; and he alone is able to supply the necessities of his creatures; and therefore he alone is the proper object of prayer, and it is to be made to no other.

"Prayer is an offering up of our *desires* to God." It is not the presenting of our bodies before the Lord, and addressing him with our lips, that constitutes prayer. This, if the desires of the heart are wanting, is no prayer in his sight. Words, without thoughts and desires, will never enter heaven as acceptable prayer. God requires the heart in all our services: "My son give me thine heart;" Prov. xxiii. 26. "Pour out your heart before him;" Ps. lxii. 8. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth;" John iv. 24. And God by his prophet Isaiah denounced judgments against those who drew near unto him with their mouth, and honoured him with their lips; but removed their heart far from him;" Is. xxix. 13, 14. God looks at the desires, and not at the words. Should our words be ever so well selected and arranged, if we be destitute of desires after those things we express in words, our prayers are a mere lifeless form, unacceptable to God; yea, more, they are an abomination to him. On the contrary, if we go to God with desires, even if we are not able to express these desires in words, or can express them, but in a stammering, and unconnected manner, if the desires be right, our prayers will be accepted.

Again, "Prayer is an offering up of our desires to God, for *things agreeable to his will*." Thus we read, 1 John v. 14; "This is the confidence that we have in him, that,

if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us." And James tells us, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts;" Jam. iv. 3. If therefore we ask for any thing sinful, or not according to the will of God, we have no right to expect that he will hear us. In his word we have his will made known, whatever therefore, he has there taught, he is willing to do for ourselves or others, we are authorized to pray for. And it becomes us to study the word of God, that we may know for what things to pray.

Again, to pray acceptably we must pray in the *name of Christ.* Man is a sinful creature; and as such, he cannot acceptably approach an infinitely holy and just God, in his own name, or through his own merits. An adequate atonement must be made for sin. There must be a mediator between God and the sinner, able to reconcile the infinitely holy and just God to the guilty sinner. This mediator is the Lord Jesus Christ alone; for he alone is able to make, and has made, an adequate atonement for sin. That we must pray in the name of Christ is further taught by many express texts of Scripture, as the following: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;" John xiv. 13. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in *my name* he will give it you;" John xvi. 23. "I am the way, and the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me;" John xiv. 6. "In whom (that is Christ) we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him;" Eph. iii. 12. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such a high priest became us;" Heb. vii. 25, 26. Hence it is evident that all acceptable prayer must be offered up in the name of Christ.

But here it is important to observe, that to pray in the name of Christ, is not barely to mention his name with our lips in the conclusion, or in any part of our prayers. Many thus use the name of Christ, who do not pray in his name; but who are enemies of his cross. Many thus call him Lord, Lord, to whom he will at last say, I never knew you, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity. To pray in the name of Christ is, under a sense of our unworthiness, guilt, and necessities; and believing in the media-

tion of Christ, and the promises of God, in and through him, to draw all our encouragement to pray, and all our hopes of acceptance in prayer, from him, and him alone.

As to the *manner* in which we ought to pray, we have already considered it in part. We have seen that we should pray with the heart, or offer up desires to God; that we should pray for such things as are agreeable to the will of God; and that we should pray in the name of Christ. We may further observe:

We ought to pray with an awful sense of the majesty of God. "With God is terrible majesty; Job. xxxvii. 22. "God trieth the hearts and reins;" Ps. vii. 9. He desireth "truth in the inward parts;" Ps. li. 6. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity;" Hab. i. 13. He is a God of almighty power, who can do with us as he pleases, and who holds our eternal destinies in his hands. He is therefore "greatly to be feared; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him;" Ps. lxxxix. 7. And it becomes us to approach him, filled with solemn awe, under a realizing sense of his character.

We ought also to pray under *a deep sense of our own unworthiness, necessities, and sins.* We are sinful, guilty creatures, unworthy of the least of God's mercies, and entirely dependent on him, for every thing we need. It therefore becomes us to come before God, under a deep sense of these things. The prodigal approached his Father saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" Luk. xv. 21. Thus the publican approached God, when he went up into the temple to pray; "Standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying. God be merciful to me a sinner;" Luk. xviii. 13. And thus we find, from their prayers which are left on record, David, Ezra, Daniel, and the Scripture saints generally, approached God, realizing their unworthiness, necessities, and sins.

Again, we ought to pray with *penitent, thankful, and enlarged hearts.* Under a sense of our sinfulness, we ought to pray with penitent hearts; for "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God thou wilt not despise;" Ps. li. 17. Under a sense of the divine goodness, we ought to pray with thank-

ful hearts. "With thanksgiving (saith our text) let your requests be made known unto God." We ought also to pray with enlarged hearts, desiring and expecting great blessings. For God has said, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it;" Ps. LXXXI. 10. We glorify the infinitely rich grace of God, by coming with enlarged hearts.

Again, we ought to pray with *faith*. "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;" Heb. xi. 6. And our Saviour promised, "All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive; Mat. xxi. 22. And James exhorted, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering;" Jam. i. 6.

We ought also to pray with *fervour*, or an engagedness of soul. For "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much; Jam. v. 16. Further, we ought to pray with a *forgiving* spirit, and in charity with all men. For our Saviour hath directed, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses;" Mark xi. 25, 26.

We ought also to pray with *perseverance*, and not give over, because we have not the assurance that we are immediately answered. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" Luk. xviii. 1.

And we ought to look after our prayers, and wait for an answer, with such a solicitude as those manifest, who are desirous to receive something of importance from others.

Such is the manner in which acceptable prayer is offered to God.

But we cannot of ourselves thus pray. We are blind. We know not of ourselves, what to pray for as we ought; nor how to pray; and we have of ourselves no holy desires to pray aright. The Spirit of God helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us how to pray aright, and every acceptable prayer is offered up by the *help* of the *Holy Spirit*. This we are taught in the following passage: "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot

be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God;" Rom. viii. 26, 27.

How absolutely, brethren, are we dependent on the grace of God for all spiritual blessings. For not only are these blessings given freely when we ask, without any thing in return from us, to entitle us to them; but we are excited to ask, and our very petitions are indicted by the Holy Spirit. Let us then ever feel our dependence on the aids of the Spirit, and seek his help; and let us ascribe the glory of all the good we are or have to the grace of God.

The *use* of prayer has been disputed by some, on the ground, that God knows our wants before we inform him, and that his purposes are fixed, and our prayers cannot alter them. To such I would answer. The use of prayer is not to inform the omniscient God of something which he did not know before; but to bring us into such a humble, dependent, believing, and thankful frame of mind, as to fit us to receive the divine blessings, and improve them aright. Further, it is true, that God's purposes are fixed, and our prayers cannot alter them; but at the same time the means and end are inseparably connected together in the divine counsels. God has determined to bestow blessings upon his people; but at the same time, he has equally determined, that he will be sought unto, by prayer, to bestow these blessings.

Besides, the objector has the whole word of God against him. And not only this, but the dictates of reason, and the feelings of mankind, expressed by the voice of all ages and nations, are against him. And his own practice would soon contradict his present sentiments, if he was with Paul brought to see himself. Soon would it be said of him, as of Paul, "Behold he prayeth."

Of the great *efficacy* of prayer, we have several instances in the Scriptures. Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant, and by his importunity prevailed to obtain a blessing. Moses stood in the breach between an offended God, and a guilty people, and by his prayers prevailed to avert deserved and threatened destruction. Elijah prayed, and the judgments of dearth and famine followed in answer. He prayed again, and the heavens

gave their rain, and the earth brought forth its increase. The disciples were with one accord, in one place, on the day of Pentecost, doubtless praying, and suddenly the Holy Ghost was poured upon them, and their word was attended with irresistible energy, and vast multitudes were added to the church. "Prayer was made without ceasing of the church, unto God" for Peter, when in prison; and the night before his intended execution, the Lord sent his angel and miraculously released him. These are some of the instances, which are recorded in Scripture, of the great efficacy of prayer, to encourage the friends, and confound the enemies of this duty. And we are told, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much;" Jam. v. 16.

In the conclusion of this discourse, let me ask you my hearers, do you pray? If you do not, you have no part in the blessings of salvation. Every prayerless soul is a Christless soul. The word of God every where condemns you; and the Heathen will rise up in the judgment against you; for they pray to their stupid idols, the only gods they know; but you pray not to the true God, whose being and character are made known unto you. You are yet in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of iniquity; God is angry with you every day; and soon will his wrath be poured out upon you, unless you repent, and begin, in earnest, by prayer, to call upon him. He will pour out his fury upon the people that call not on his name.

Do you pray, my hearers? But are your prayers a lifeless form? Do you not offer up the desires of your hearts unto God? Do you not, when you approach God, feel the absolute need of a mediator between you and a holy God, and rely for the acceptance of your petitions on his merits alone? Do you not pray for such things as are agreeble to the divine will? And do you not pray with reverence, and humility, with pemtent, believing, and thankful hearts, and in charity with all men? Your prayers are no prayers in the sight of God; but an abomination to him. The Lord will not hear you: you are yet in your sins and under his wrath. O prayerless sinner, awake and call upon God. Begin to pray, in earnest, now, while your prayers may be heard, and answered, or you will pray in vain when it is too late. You will hereafter, cry Lord, Lord, open unto us, and will hear the

answer, I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity. Or you will pray as the rich man did, for a drop of water to cool your tormented tongue, and will hear the answer that there is an impassible gulf fixed between you and the place of happiness. Be intreated, my hearers, to seek the Lord now, while he may be found, and to call upon him now while he is near, lest the dreadful sentence be executed upon you, "Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." May the Lord of his infinite mercy keep us all from this dreadful doom.—Amen.

SERMON CVI.

THE KINDS AND SEASONS OF PRAYER.

EPHESIANS VI. 18. FIRST CLAUSE.

"*Praying always with all prayer.*"

"Praying always" is an exhortation frequently given in the Scriptures. The import of this exhortation is, not that we should be always upon our knees, formally employed in the act of praying unto God; for then there would be no time for the performance of the numerous other duties incumbent upon us; but that we should habitually maintain a praying frame of heart, be frequent and constant or habitual in the performance of the duty, have stated seasons daily devoted to it, and never neglect it in the proper seasons. Hence the clause "praying always" will lead us to consider the *seasons* of prayer.

The other clause of the text, " with all prayer," refers to the different kinds of prayer in which it is our duty to engage. Thus the phrase is generally understood. Hence this clause will lead us to consider the several *kinds* of prayer. The object of the ensuing discourse is to treat of the *kinds and seasons of prayer.*

1. The several *kinds* of prayer. Prayer may be divided into four kinds; viz. public, family, secret, and ejaculatory. The two former are social, the two latter are personal and private.

1. *Public* prayer. This is that which is offered up in the public assembly, met for the worship of God. Public worship is a duty frequently enjoined in the word of God. Among other texts, the following is very explicit. " Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is;" Heb. x. 25. It is a duty which the people of God have performed, and have prized in all ages. And it is a duty, to the right performance of which, the Lord has made many special and precious promises; such as, " The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob;" Ps. LXXXVII. 2. And " Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst, of them;" Mat. xviii. 20. Prayer is a part, and an important part of public worship, as we abundantly learn from the Scriptures. And although it is not the duty of all to lead in the public prayers of the congregation; yet it is their duty to attend upon them, and unite in spirit with those who may lead in them.

2. *Family prayer.* That this is a duty may be proved from its reasonableness and advantages; and from the examples, precepts, and imprecations of Scripture.

1. The duty of family prayer may be proved from its *reasonableness.* Man is a social creature, and it is therefore a dictate of natural religion that he should engage in social worship, and therefore in social prayer, which is a part of worship. And if it is agreeable to his nature, that he should engage in social prayer, and therefore a duty, it must be his duty to engage in family prayer; for in the family he has the best opportunity to engage in social prayer, and here the social feelings are naturally the strongest. Besides if it be our duty, as must be admitted by all, to acknowledge our dependence on God, to implore his blessing, and to thank him, in every capacity or

state in which we are dependent, need his blessing, and receive it, then is family prayer highly reasonable, and obligatory upon us. For as families, we derive our existence from God ; as families, we are as much dependent on him as individuals ; as families we need his blessing and cannot prosper without it ; and as families we are made the subjects of many favours, which deserve family thanksgivings. And to neglect family prayer is a practical denial that God has anything to do with us, or deserves anything from us as families. It is a practical denial that as families we are dependent on him, need his blessing, or have received any favours at his hands, worthy our gratitude. And most assuredly the Heathen will rise up in judgment against such ; for they, guided by the light of nature alone, have their Penates, or household gods which they worship in their families.

2. The *advantages* of family prayer prove the duty.—Families are radical societies, out of which all others, both civil and ecclesiastical are formed ; and as are the parts so will be the whole. If then the prosperity, and even the existence of the church of God in the world be important, and if it be our duty to endeavour to maintain the existence and promote the prosperity of the church then is family prayer important, and a duty ; for if God be feared, he will be honoured in our families ; and if the fear of God were excluded from families, it would be excluded from the church too, and of course the church must cease to exist. For it cannot exist without the fear of God.

Further it is an incontrovertible fact that religion is conducive and necessary to the well-being of civil society. Therefore since society is composed of families, it is important that religion, of which prayer is an essential part, should be maintained in families. And if it were universally neglected in families, in vain would we look for its influence on society.

Further it is our duty to endeavour to effect the piety of our children and domestics. God has committed them to our care, and he will call us to an account for our faithfulness in training them up for his service. He has commanded us, "Train up a child in the way he should go ;" and to show the importance of it, he has added, "when he is old, he will not depart from it ;" Prov. xxii. 6. And a-

gain he has commanded ; "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath : but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ;" Eph. vi. 4. He commended Abraham for his attention to the religious education of his children, saying, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord ;" Gen. xviii. 19. And he reproved Eli, and entailed a lasting curse upon his family, for neglecting this duty. Hence it is evident that our duty to our God requires that we should labour to effect the piety of our children and domestics ; and if it be advantageous to ourselves to perform our duty, and secure the approbation of our God, then it is important that we should bring up those under our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The advantages of piety in our children and domestics, both to church and state, also teach that it is our duty to use the means calculated to secure this end. And further the advantages of piety to our children and domestics themselves, and its necessity to their everlasting happiness, teach us that it is our duty to use our endeavours that they may possess it. If they have true religion, they will be forever happy ; and if they fail of true religion, they will be forever miserable. From all these considerations we conclude, it is very important, that those under our care should have true religion, and that we ought anxiously to use the means which are calculated to effect this desirable end. Our own interest, the interests of the church, and of civil society, and the eternal interests of those under our care, all demand it. And if the piety of our families, be so important, family prayer must also be important, and an indispensable duty : for family prayer is an important means of grace. Precept without example will have but little effect. If we tell those under our care, it is their duty to pray, and seek the salvation of their souls, if they never see us pray, or hear us pray for them, they will not be likely to feel our advice to be important, or to follow it. And therefore without family prayer we can have but little reason to hope our children and domestics will be pious. And further, facts teach the advantages of the habitual performance of this duty. Facts prove that the church is chiefly replenished from such families ; that in general those who are educated in such families make the most

orderly, and useful members of society; and that they, who become hopefully pious, are generally the children of such families. Hence we infer the duty. If the advantages of family religion are so great, its performance must be duty.

3. This duty may be argued from the *examples* of some of the Scripture *saints*. Of Abraham the Lord testified, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord;" Gen. xviii. 19. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in their sojournings, where they pitched their tents, built altars to the Lord, at which they worshipped God with their families. Job "rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of his children. "Thus did Job continually;" Job. i. 5. Joshua resolved "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" Josh. xxiv. 15. David after spending the day, in bringing the ark to its place, "returned to bless his household;" 2. Sam. vi. 20. Daniel at the risk of his life, "Went into his house, and kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime;" Dan. vi. 10. Paul thrice mentions a church in a private house. And of Cornelius, it is said, he "feared God with all his house, and prayed to God always;" Acts x. 2. It is probable that all these instances relate to family worship. And that some of them do, there can scarcely be a doubt. These examples are left on record for our imitation, and they teach us the duty. For we are exhorted, "Be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" Heb. vi. 12. In addition to the foregoing examples we may mention that of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose example, as far as it can be imitated by us, it is our duty to follow.—We frequently find him praying with his family, the apostles. And we may add further under this argument drawn from example, that the most pious persons in every age have felt themselves bound to perform this duty and have accordingly performed it with delight.

4. This duty may also be argued from some few Scripture *precepts*. Peter exhorted husbands to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, that their prayers might not be hindered; 1. Pet. iii. 7; which clearly implies that they are to pray together. Paul having exhorted the Colossians to a number of relative duties in

families, subjoined, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;" Col. iv. 2. This text from its connexion appears to be addressed to families. And the same apostle said, "I will that men pray every where;" 1 Tim. ii. 8. And in our text he exhorted men to pray with all prayer." The presumption is that under these comprehensive terms, family prayer is included.

5. The duty of family prayer is further proved by that dreadful *imprecation* of the prophet Jeremiah. "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not on thy name;" Jer. x. 25.

We proceed to consider the

3. Kind of prayer, viz. *secret*, which should be performed by each individual alone. Much need not be said to prove this kind of prayer to be duty. Pious persons in all ages have lived in the habitual practice of it. Numerous examples of its performance are recorded in Scripture. Our Saviour also has set us an example in this respect that we should follow in his steps. We read that he went apart to a mountain, a garden, and other private places to pray; and that he rose before day, and retired in the night for this purpose. He has also given us directions how this duty should be performed, which certainly implies the duty. "When thou prayest (said he) enter into thy closet;" that is, some place removed from human observation, "and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly;" Mat. vi. 6.

4. The 4th kind of prayer is called *ejaculatory*. This also is personal and secret; and it differs from secret prayer, properly so called, only in this, that we retire for the latter, and formally engage in it, while the former is putting up with our hearts a short petition, confession, or thanksgiving, while engaged in our ordinary worldly business. We proceed to the

II. General head of our discourse, viz. to consider the proper *seasons* for prayer, or how often we ought to engage in this duty.

As to the public prayers of the congregation, in which it is our duty to unite, we ought to engage in them, at least every Sabbath, except when necessarily prevented. And the christian who loves prayer, and who delights, as he

ought, to engage in this duty with the people of God, will cheerfully embrace other opportunities, besides the Sabbath, to unite in public and social prayer. The apostles and primitive christians did not confine their social worship to the Sabbath, but they frequently engaged in this business on other days of the week. These extra meetings for social prayer have ever been precious to the people of God; and they have been signally attended with the divine blessing. And the blessing with which God has attended them, teaches us that it is not only a duty, but a privilege, frequently to unite in social prayer, on other days besides the Sabbath.

As to the seasons of family and secret prayer, it is abundantly evident from Scripture, we should be frequent and habitual in the performance of these duties. This we are taught by the exhortations to pray *always*, to *continue* in prayer, and to continue *instant* in prayer. And the Scriptures also teach, that we should perform these duties *daily*, and not only daily, but at least *morning* and *evening*. The Psalmist said, "*Every day* will I bless thee;" Ps. CXLV. 2. "Unto thee will I pray. My voice shalt thou hear in the *morning*, O Lord; in the *morning* will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up;" Ps. v. 2. 3. "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord —To show forth thy loving-kindness in the *morning*, and thy faithfulness *every night*;" Ps. xcii. 1, 2. Yea the Psalmist was still more frequent in his devotions. For we hear him saying: "*Evening* and *morning*, and at *noon* will I pray;" Ps. LV. 17. Daniel prayed in his house *three* times a day. The daily sacrifices under the law afford us some light on this subject. They were offered morning and evening. From all this evidence may be inferred, that family and secret prayer ought each to be performed at least *twice* in each day, that is, morning and evening. And reason seems to point us to prayer, at least morning and evening. It is reasonable that we should begin the day with God, thank him for the preservation and mercies of the night, and ask his presence and blessing through the day. And it is equally reasonable that we should end the day with him, and commit ourselves to his care through the night. The division of time into day and night seems to point us to the duty of prayer, morning and evening.

For ejaculatory prayer, there are no stated seasons. Frequently through the day, when in company, or when engaged in our ordinary business, we may lift up our hearts to God. This kind of prayer, says one, enters heaven sooner than any other. It is divested of that formality which is apt to be attached to our other prayers, and flows warm from the heart.

In the application of this subject, we may reflect what a blessing is it, that we may pray in hope of acceptance! If we had our deserts, we should be shut out from the presence of God, and he would refuse to hear us. But instead of this he has erected a throne of grace, and invites us to come boldly to it, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. We ought with thankfulness to embrace the permission. We ought never to feel prayer to be a task. We ought to esteem it a high privilege, and embrace it as such with delight.

But alas! how many are there who if they do pray, perform it as a necessary task, to which they are driven by conscience! They perform it, in a heartless manner; and they are glad when they have finished it. Such cannot have the temper of God's children. For *they* habitually delight in this duty; and whenever they feel a backwardness or coldness in the performance of it, they mourn. With David, they can say, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; to show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night;" Ps. xcii. 1, 2.

But alas! again, how many are there who neglect the duty of prayer altogether! They lie down and rise up, and spend day after day, without praying to the great God, who has commanded them to pray to him, on whom they are continually dependent, from whom they receive all their blessings, and at whose disposal they entirely are. That there should be such persons in our world, possessed of reason, is astonishing, and shows the exceeding depravity of fallen man. All such persons must undoubtedly be in the road to destruction. Prayerless persons are surely graceless persons. And they who will not call upon God now, but continue to neglect prayer, will ere long call and will not be heard. Let prayerless persons take warning.

It is the duty of every person, of every age and every

condition, to pray in secret; and although they may externally join in the public prayers of God's house, or in the prayers which may be offered in the families, in which they reside; and although they may even lead in public or family prayer, yet if they habitually neglect secret prayer, they must be strangers to the grace of God.

Are there any present who neglect secret prayer? Whatever your profession may be, you have no Scriptural evidence that you are christians. You cannot be christians, and live in the habitual neglect of this duty. You can have no title to heaven; but must yet be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity. Awake to a sense of your condition; and this day go by yourselves, and begin to pray unto the Lord, and cry to him to have mercy upon you. And let no day pass without being in your closet, and on your knees before God.

Are there here any heads of families who neglect family prayer? You have heard that this is a duty. What excuse can you offer to justify the neglect of this duty? Will you say, I am not a professor of religion? But the neglect of one duty will not excuse for the neglect of another. Because you are not a professor of religion, has God no right to you, or your family? Are you under no obligations to worship him? Has he no right to your service? And are you in no danger of his wrath, if you neglect his service? How monstrously absurd!

But will you object again, I cannot find time? Are you not a candidate for eternity? And if so, what is the great and most important business of time? Is it not to prepare for eternity? And is not the care of your soul, and of the souls of your family, of more importance to you and them, than any thing else? Nothing can have such a claim upon your time as religion. If therefore you are engaged in a business which forbids you to pray in your family, you ought without hesitation instantly to relinquish it. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mat xvi. 26.

Will you say again, I know not how to pray? If you were impressed with a sense of your necessities as you ought to be, you would soon have enough to say. The beggar at your door knows how to let his wants be known, and to prefer his request for relief. If nothing more and

worse, pride, which is very criminal, lies at the foundation of this objection.

Do you say again, I have so long neglected it that I am ashamed to begin? You ought to be ashamed that you have so long neglected it; but you ought not to be ashamed to correct, what you have reason to be ashamed of.

Do you object again, my family will not join with me? But are you not, or ought you not to be the master of your own house? And have you fairly made the experiment whether your family will submit to such a regulation? And should they oppose, whom are you to obey, them or God?

There is in fact, my hearers, no excuse that will stand the test of reason, and much less of the bar of God, where you will shortly have to answer for your neglect of duty. If you felt as you ought to feel, these objections would appear trifling.

Are there here any heads of families who *profess* religion, and yet neglect family prayer? Such act entirely inconsistent with their profession. If your neglect be known to the world, you are a great stumbling-block to those that are without; and the authority of the church can be discharged from criminality in retaining you in the communion, only on the principle, that they are ignorant of your criminal neglect. But God knows it and he will soon reckon with you.

Every head of a family, whether he professes religion or not, who neglects the duty of family prayer is called upon seriously to consider this subject, and no longer to continue in this neglect. You are practically denying the dependence of your family on God, and that as a family you need any favours, or have received any, worthy of your gratitude. Consider all the reasons which have been offered to establish this duty, and especially consider your great responsibility, in having the interests of the immortal souls of your children and domestics committed to your care. Do you love your children? and can you bear the thought that they should be lost through your neglect? The guilt of that parent, in whose skirts the blood of the souls of his children shall be found, in the great day of account, must be great, and his doom dreadful indeed! And there is very great reason to fear

that the children of prayerless families will be lost. For God will pour out his fury upon the families that call not on his name. How will you bear to meet your children at the bar of God, and hear them tell you, heaping curses upon your heads, that it was through your neglect, they lost their souls? How will you bear to spend an eternity with them in misery, under such reflections and imprecations? Heads of families, in whose houses there is no domestic altar, and who never collect your children around you, and pray to God with them and for them, go and seriously reflect upon this subject.

SERMON CVII.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

MATTHEW VI. 9—13.

"*After this manner therefore, pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.—Amen.*"

"We know not, what we should pray for as we ought;" Rom. viii. 26. We need therefore to ask of Christ, as one of his disciples did, "Lord, teach us to pray;" Luk. xi. 1. We need direction from above; and the Lord has been graciously pleased to give us the needed direction, to which it becometh us diligently to attend.

The rule of direction we have pointed out in our Catechism in the answer to the 99th question:

"*What rule hath God given us for our direction in prayer? The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer.*"

The word of God generally is of use to direct us in prayer. It teaches us our necessities and duty, and what things are agreeable to the will of God, for which we may pray. It teaches us, for our encouragement, the character of God, as a sin-pardoning, and a prayer-hearing God, ready to bestow upon those who ask him, the blessings they need. It contains also, for our encouragement, many precious promises which we may plead in prayer, and examples of answers to prayer. And it furnishes us with many petitions, used by others in situations similar to our own, which we may use and make our own. An acquaintance with the word of God, will therefore be found of great use, to direct and assist us in prayer; and it becomes us to study it, that we may know for what, and how to pray.

But while the word of God generally is of use to direct us in prayer, we have a special rule of direction in that form of prayer, which Christ taught his disciples, commonly called the Lord's prayer. This undoubtedly may be used as a prayer. But that it was intended to be a directory by which to frame our prayers, rather than a form, to the express words of which, we are obliged to be confined, appears from several considerations.

1. From the manner in which it is introduced in our text; "After this *manner*, therefore pray ye," which seems clearly to be an intimation, that it was intended to be, rather a directory, after the *manner* of which prayers were to be framed, than a form of words to be used without variation.

It is true that Luke introduces this prayer in different words. "When ye pray say, "Our Father, &c.;" Luk. xi. 2. But as Matthew has given this prayer much more fully than Luke, we have reason to believe, that, "When ye pray, say," in Luke, means the same, as "After this manner pray ye," in Matthew.

2. If this prayer was intended to be, not a directory, but a precise form, we should have had it in the same words in both Matthew and Luke. These two are the only evangelists who have recorded this prayer; and the time when it was spoken, as recorded by Luke, was evidently different from the time when it was spoken as recorded by Matthew. If therefore our Lord had intended that it should be used as a form instead of a directory, it

is reasonable to suppose, that when he spake it the second time, he would have used precisely the same words, as he did the first time; but this is not the case. In some petitions, different words are used, though the sense is retained; and a part is entirely omitted. In Matthew the fourth petition is, "Give us this day our daily bread;" in Luke it is, "Give us day by day our daily bread." In Matthew the fifth petition is, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" in Luke it is, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." And the last sentence, according to Matthew; "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen," is entirely omitted by Luke. From this variation we infer, that the Lord's prayer was not intended to be used as a precise form, but principally as a directory in prayer.

3. We have no proof that the apostles used this form of prayer. For it is no where said in the New Testament that they did: although we have several of their prayers recorded, and although they kept themselves within the limits of this directory.

But while we believe and maintain that we are not bound to use the Lord's prayer as a form, in its precise words; yet we allow, that it is proper to use it, either by itself, or as some do, to begin or conclude other prayers with. But while it is thus used, it ought to be done with understanding and reverence; and we ought carefully to guard against all formality, and all superstitious use of it, as though there was a merit in using it, and as though there was a charm in the words to procure blessings, apart from the temper of heart, with which the words are pronounced.

But while we hold that we are not bound to use this prayer as a form, we hold it to be an important directory, to which it becomes us to take heed; and a very comprehensive summary of the matter proper to be used in prayer.

In the remainder of this discourse, I will endeavour to explain the meaning of the several parts of the Lord's prayer.

It consists of three parts, viz. a preface, petitions, and conclusion.

I. The *preface*,—"*Our Father which art in heaven.*"

This preface of the Lord's prayer, according to our

Catechism "*teacheth us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us, and that we should pray with and for others.*"

In this preface we are tanght, that we ought to begin our prayers, with making mention of the name of God, and some of his divine perfections; that we ought to address him with reverence, under a sense of the infinite distance that there is between us and him, as he is not only our Father, but our Father *in heaven*, infinitely exalted above us; and that we should approach him in prayer, in the way of the covenant of grace, relying upon the merits of Christ for pardon and acceptance, and with a filial temper; for it is only in the covenant of grace, which is made in and through Christ, that God is to the sinner a reconciled God and Father; and it is certain that he is the covenant God and Father of none but those who are reconciled unto him, and have a filial temper. This preface further teaches us that the people of God may and ought to approach him with a humble confidence, as children come to a good Father, able and ready to help them. For if God be our Father, it certainly belongs to his character, to listen to the requests of his children, and to grant them as far as they are for their good.

Further, this preface teaches us the duty of social prayer. We are not only to pray, each one by himself in secret, and say, *my* Father; but we are also to pray together and say "*our* Father."

II. We proceed to the second division of the Lord's prayer, viz. the *petitions*, which are six.

1. The *first* is "*hallowed be thy name.*" In this petition "*We pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby he maketh himself known, and that he would dispose of all things to his own glory.*"

By the name of God, we are to understand himself, as made known to us, in all the ways in which he manifests his character: as by his names properly so called, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works. By hallowing the name of God, we are to understand, sanctifying, honouring, or glorifying God himself. In this petition therefore we are taught to pray, that God may be glorified in all whereby he maketh himself known; and as he maketh himself known by all his works, we are here taught to pray that he would dispose of all things for the advancement of his own glory; and that he would by his grace en-

able us and others, willingly and actively to glorify him; and that therefore he would enable us and others to hate and forsake sin, which robs God of his glory: to believe in, admire, adore, and love him, and thus glorify him in heart; to speak forth his praise, and thus glorify him with the tongue; and to obey his commandments and thus glorify him in the conduct of our lives.

And here it is worthy of observation that this petition, that God's name may be hallowed, is placed first, which may teach us, that the glory of God should be our first and chief object, to which every other ought to be subordinate. And here we may further remark; how inconsistent, and wicked is the conduct of many! They pretend to pray to God; and run over the Lord's prayer, and using this petition, pray that his name may be glorified, and yet constanly dishonour him with their hearts, their lips, and their lives; and while they pretend to pray that he may be glorified, at the same time do almost all that they can to dishonour him themselves, and to lead others also to do the same.

2. The *second* petition is, "*thy kingdom come.*" In this petition, "*we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.*"

By the kingdom of God here, for the coming of which we are to pray, we are not to understand the kingdom of his providence; for this was already come when Christ spake this prayer; but his spiritual kingdom, or the kingdom of grace and glory, which our Saviour very frequently called the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of grace has already come in part; but still it is proper to pray that it may come more fully and gloriously. Satan has usurped a dominion in this world; he is called the prince of this world, and he ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience. The kingdom of God, and of Satan, are directly opposed to each other, and the kingdom of God's grace has been set up in our world on purpose to destroy the kingdom of Satan. Therefore in praying, "thy kingdom come," we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed, in our own hearts, and the hearts of others throughout the world. We pray that the grace of God may rule, abound, and in-

crease in our hearts; and that every thing which is opposite to it, in our hearts or lives, may be put down and taken away. We pray also, that the gospel may have free course where it is preached; that they who are out of the kingdom of Christ may be brought in; that all his people may be abundantly replenished with his grace, and bring forth holy fruit to his glory; that the gospel may be sent where it is not; that all the means using for the spread of the gospel may be prospered; that Pagan idolatry, Jewish infidelity, Mahometan delusion, and Popish superstition may come to an end; that the Sun of Righteousness may arise upon these benighted parts of the earth with healing in his wings; and that the glorious millennial period, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, may speedily come.

In this petition we also pray that the kingdom of glory may be hastened: or that the day of the complete triumph of Christ over all his enemies, when the church shall pass from its militant to its triumphant state, may speedily come. "Surely I come quickly," says Christ. And every christian ought to respond; "Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus;" Rev. xxii. 20, 21.

3. The *third* petition is, "*thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" In this petition, "*we pray that God by his grace would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things as the angels do in heaven.*"

By the *will* of God here, we are to understand, that which he requires of us to do, and that which he pleases to do with us. And this petition teaches us to pray, that we may become acquainted with the will of God; that knowing his will we may have a desire and disposition to do whatsoever he commands, and strength to act according to the desires and resolutions of our hearts; and that we may without murmuring and with patience and resignation bear and submit to his will, when he pleases to chastise us. And we are further taught in this petition to pray that we may know, obey, and submit to the will of God, with the same temper, and in like manner, as saints and angels in heaven; that is with the like humility, cheerfulness, faithfulness, diligence, zeal, sincerity, and constancy. And we are further taught to pray, not only that

the will of God, may thus be known obeyed, and submitted to by us; but also by the whole earth.

4. The *fourth* petition is, "*give us this day our daily bread.*" In this petition, "*we pray, that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.*"

In this petition we are taught, to acknowledge our constant dependence on God, for every temporal comfort; that every temporal blessing we receive, is a free unmerited gift from him; that we are to ask, not for abundance, but for a competency, or for daily bread; and that having food and raiment, or a competency of temporal blessings we should be thankful and contented.

5. The *fifth* petition is, "*and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" In this petition, "*we pray, that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.*"

By debts in this petition, we are to understand sins.—In this petition we acknowledge ourselves sinners, deserving of the wrath of God, and unable to pay the dreadful debt we owe to divine justice, and that therefore we lie at mercy and seek forgiveness. And since it is abundantly evident from the word of God that forgiveness is offered and extended to the sinner, only through Christ, in this petition we ask, the forgiveness of our sins through the merits of Christ, and acknowledge the sacrifice which he has made for sin. In this petition we are taught the importance and necessity of praying with a temper of forgiveness towards our fellow men, who may have injured or offended us; and we are taught to use our forgiveness of others, as an argument, why we should be forgiven; and to expect forgiveness from God, only as we forgive our fellow men. This petition by no means implies, that there is any merit in forgiving others, entitling us to forgiveness from God; but only that we are hence encouraged to hope that we have the disposition, suitable to receive forgiveness, as a free favour from the hands of God. Neither does this petition imply that every person who forgives shall be forgiven; but only that those who forgive from right motives, may from hence take encouragement to hope that God will forgive them.—This petition further teaches us, that they who pray

to God, while they hold anger, malice, and revenge, towards any of their fellow men, or refuse to forgive them, have no just ground to expect that God will hear or forgive them. This is confirmed by other declarations of our Saviour. "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses;" Mat. vi. 14, 15. And again, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses;" Mark xi. 25. 26. Hence it is evident that if we do not pray with a forgiving temper, we can have no Scriptural ground to hope that the Lord will hear or forgive us. And every time we say the Lord's prayer with an unforgiving temper, and holding malice against any; or every time we make a prayer conformable to the Lord's prayer with such a temper, we do virtually pray for our own perdition. And how, my hearers, can we dare to lift up our faces to God, and ask him to forgive us, to speak in the language of the parable, the ten thousand talents we owe him, when we refuse to forgive our brother, the offences which he has committed against us, which are in comparison as nothing?

6. The *sixth* petition is, "*and lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.*" In this petition, "*we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted unto sin or support and deliver us when we are tempted.*"

This petition supposes, that we are exposed to temptation, and that God may justly leave us to be tempted to sin. And it is true that we are in a world, where we are exposed to many temptations, from the men and the things of the world, from the remaining corruptions of our own hearts, and from Satan the great adversary, who goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. This petition further supposes, that we are afraid of sin, and sensible of our own weakness to resist temptations. We therefore pray that God would not suffer us to be tempted to sin; or that if he sees fit to permit us to be tempted, he would support us under temptations, keep us from yielding to them, and give us grace to resist and o-

vercome them, so that we may be delivered from the evil of sin.

III. The third part of the Lord's prayer is the *conclusion.* This is in the following words, "*for thine is the kingdom, the power and glory forever ; Amen.*" This conclusion "*teacheth us, to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing the kingdom, power, and glory to him, and in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, amen.*"

This conclusion teacheth us to derive all our encouragement in prayer, not from any worthiness in ourselves, but from God alone. This is implied in the word *for*, with which this conclusion begins. That kingdom, for the coming of which we have prayed, is the Lord's, and therefore we are encouraged to hope that he will set it up, and maintain it in the world. All power is his, and therefore he is able to fulfil all our petitions. The glory, for the manifestation and advancement of which we have prayed is his, and therefore we hope that he will hear us and glorify himself. And as he can hear all our requests, for ourselves, which are according to his will, revealed in his word, consistently with his own glory ; and glorify himself by granting them, we hope that he will hear and answer us. This conclusion further teaches us, that it is our duty, in our prayers, to mingle praises to God, and ascribe to him the glory due to his name. The word "*Amen*," with which the Lord's prayer concludes, signifies either, *so be it, or so shall it be*, and probably both ; and thus expresses both our desire, that what we have prayed for, may take place, and our hope and confidence that it will.

From what has been said we may now remark, that none but those whose hearts are renewed, can rightly say the Lord's prayer, or make a prayer which contains the same sentiments. Who, but one who has a heart reconciled to God, can call him his Father? Is it not mocking God, to say "hallowed be thy name," and yet care nothing for his glory ; but daily dishonour him, and profane his name? Is it not totally inconsistent to pray "thy kingdom come, and will be done on earth as it is in heaven," when they who offer up these petitions belong to another kingdom, at open war with this, and are totally opposed to the kingdom of God, and neither do, nor desire to do his will? How can those ask aright for daily bread, who neither

feel their dependence on God, nor feel thankful for his mercies? Is it not absurd to ask the pardon of sin, and then rush immediately into it? And to ask to be forgiven as they forgive, when perhaps their hearts are filled with enmity towards a fellow creature? And is it not inconsistent, to pray to be kept out of the way of temptation, and then run wilfully into it?

Let these questions be duly considered by those who have used this, or any other prayer containing the same sentiments, in a careless manner. Let them carry conviction to their minds, of the sinfulness of their conduct. And let them, not relinquish prayer, but be careful to pray aright, and to live according to the sentiments expressed in their prayers.

I have now, my brethren, finished a course of sermons on the leading doctrines and duties contained in the word of God, and arranged in the order of our excellent Catechism. It has pleased God to spare my life to finish them, for which I desire to thank him. These sermons have been profitable to myself, and I hope and believe that my labour has not been in vain to my people; but that under them there has been a considerable increase of religious knowledge, and some fruits of real holiness. And I hope that seed has been sown which though it may seem for a time to lie buried in dust, will eventually produce an abundant harvest. Let me remind you, my hearers, that you must soon render an account to God for these, and all other sermons which you have heard. A number, who began these sermons with us, are now in the eternal world. We also must soon be there. Let us therefore be diligent in improving the means with which we are privileged, that we may be enabled to give an account of our stewardship with joy.—AMEN & AMEN.

FINIS.